259

# POPULAR SERMONS ON THE CATECHISM

*From the German of*

REV. A. HUBERT BAMBERG

*Edited by*

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VOLUME I

FAITH

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# PREFACE

If it be generally admitted that "the poet is born and not made," the same may be said with hardly less truth of the teacher. In the case of the teacher it is even harder, perhaps, to define in words what the precise quality is which makes the instruction "bite," which presents a new idea with clearness and impresses it indelibly upon the memory. By poetry we are often dazzled and awe-struck. We are overwhelmed by an aptness of phrase or by a metrical skill which impresses us as heaven-inspired and of unapproachable difficulty. But with teaching it is otherwise. The art of the teacher is most effectively displayed when his exposition appears to be the easiest thing in the world. Simplicity of language, lucidity of thought, homely illustration, all play their part, but there is nothing which does not seem to be within the reach of the humblest and least gifted. *Ars est celare artem—it is art to hide one's artfulness,* but genius has no need to dissemble and it is in the spontaneity of this *nuda simplicitas* that the inspiration of the born teacher stands revealed.

If I affirm, then, that the Catechetical Discourses of Father Bamberg possess something of the touch of genius, it will be readily understood that I do not mean that they are necessarily brilliant in style or that they present any remarkable novelty in substance or treatment. None the less, it

seems to me that they are quite admirable as essays in popular instruction, and that the straightforward simplicity, which is their most conspicuous quality, is exalted by something in the personality of the author and lifted above the level of the trite or the commonplace. The discourses, we are given to understand, were originally taken down by a stenographer in shorthand and, in spite of the author's revisions and the inevitable drawbacks of a translation, they retain much of the spirit and the familiar tone characteristic of such impromptu utterances. Of course, they are not all of equal merit. In some the preacher seems to have been in a specially happy vein. But nearly all are interesting, nearly all are clear in expression and animated with a certain simple piety which strikes home, and there are none from which something which is both instructive and helpful may not be learned.

And this is the special utility of such a collection of sermons as the present. They convey instruction of a most necessary kind. Taken as a whole, they present a practically complete picture of Christian doctrine and practice, so far as it is important that the laity should possess what we may call a working knowledge of Catholic principles. No one who has acquainted himself with the contents of these volumes will be ignorant of what it behooves him most to know, either for the salvation of his own soul or to give a reasonable account of the faith which is in him when he is brought into contact with his non-Catholic neighbors. Such a man may not be

learned, but *he knows his religion* and he need not be ashamed in matters of greater difficulty to refer questioners to the clergy, whose profession it is to expound the doctrines of our faith.

From this point of view it is hoped that these addresses may be of use to many classes of persons, some of whom read for their own instruction and others because they find them serviceable in imparting instruction to others. There are, I venture to say, many congregations to whom it would not be displeasing if some such course of practical explanations of the catechism, as is outlined here, were to replace for a while the more ornate and rhetorical discourses to which they usually listen on Sundays. It is perhaps one of the most striking characteristics of Father Bamberg's work that he is never content to impart the dry bones of instruction without infusing into them something of the soul of piety.

HERBERT THURSTON, S.J.

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# CONTENTS


| | PAGE |
|---|---|
| SERMON I | |
| On the End of Man | 13 |
| SERMON II | |
| Faith | 21 |
| SERMON III | |
| Holy Scripture | 28 |
| SERMON IV | |
| Tradition | 37 |
| SERMON V | |
| The Necessity of Faith | 44 |
| SERMON VI | |
| The Qualities of Faith | 50 |
| SERMON VII | |
| The Confession of Our Faith | 56 |
| SERMON VIII | |
| The Essence of God | 63 |
| SERMON IX | |
| The Eternity and the Unchangeableness of God | 69 |
| SERMON X | |
| The Omnipresence of God | 76 |
| SERMON XI | |
| The Omniscience of God | 81 |

PAGE

SERMON XII
The Wisdom of God . . . . . 88

SERMON XIII
The Omnipotence of God . . . . . 95

SERMON XIV
The Holiness of God . . . . . 101

SERMON XV
The Justice of God . . . . . 108

SERMON XVI
The Goodness, Mercy, and Patience of God . 116

SERMON XVII
The Truthfulness and Fidelity of God . . 124

SERMON XVIII
The Existence of God . . . . . 130

SERMON XIX
The Existence of God . . . . . 138

SERMON XX
The Existence of God . . . . . 145

SERMON XXI
The Existence of God . . . . . 152

SERMON XXII
The Holy Trinity . . . . . 160

SERMON XXIII
The Holy Trinity . . . . . 168

SERMON XXIV
The Creation of the World . . . . . 175

SERMON XXV PAGE

THE PRESERVATION AND GOVERNMENT OF THE WORLD . . . . . 182

SERMON XXVI

THE PERMITTING OF EVIL . . . . . 189

SERMON XXVII

SUFFERING . . . . . 197

SERMON XXVIII

THE ANGELS . . . . . 205

SERMON XXIX

THE ANGEL GUARDIAN . . . . . 213

SERMON XXX

THE CREATION OF ADAM . . . . . 219

SERMON XXXI

THE CREATION OF EVE . . . . . 225

SERMON XXXII

THE ENDOWMENT OF THE FIRST MAN . . . . 232

SERMON XXXIII

THE SIN OF OUR FIRST PARENTS . . . . . 239

SERMON XXXIV

ORIGINAL SIN . . . . . 247

SERMON XXXV

THE PROMISE OF THE SAVIOUR . . . . . 255

SERMON XXXVI

THE NAME OF JESUS . . . . . 262

SERMON XXXVII

JESUS, THE MESSIAS . . . . . 269

PAGE

SERMON XXXVIII
Jesus Christ, True God . . . . . 276

SERMON XXXIX
The Incarnation . . . . . 283

SERMON XL
The Sufferings of Christ . . . . . 289

SERMON XLI
The Descent of Christ into Hell . . . . 297

SERMON XLII
The Resurrection . . . . . 304

SERMON XLIII
The Resurrection . . . . . 311

SERMON XLIV
The Ascension . . . . . 318

SERMON XLV
The General Judgment . . . . . 325

SERMON XLVI
The Holy Ghost . . . . . 333

SERMON XLVII
Conception, Definition, and Origin of the Church . . . . . 343

SERMON XLVIII
Peter the Head of the Church . . . . . 350

SERMON XLIX
The Pope the Successor of St. Peter . . . 358

SERMON L PAGE
THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH AND THE MARKS BY WHICH WE MAY KNOW HER . . . . . 366

SERMON LI
THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AS THE TRUE CHURCH . 373

SERMON LII
THE ENDS AND THE ENDOWMENT OF THE CHURCH . 381

SERMON LIII
THE INFALLIBILITY OF CATHOLIC TEACHING . . 388

SERMON LIV
THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS . . . . . 399

SERMON LV
DEATH . . . . . 407

SERMON LVI
THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY . . . . . 414

SERMON LVII
PURGATORY . . . . . 422

SERMON LVIII
HELL . . . . . 429

SERMON LIX
HELL . . . . . 437

SERMON LX
HEAVEN . . . . . 444

# POPULAR SERMONS ON THE CATECHISM

## SERMON I

### On the End of Man

*"What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?"* (*Matt.* xvi. 26.)

It is our purpose from this day forward, with the help of the Holy Ghost, to undertake a series of discourses which shall be devoted Sunday by Sunday to the explanation of the catechism.

Do not say: "We do not need an explanation of the catechism. That is for school children." It is true that as school children you have had the catechism in your hands, and have learned it by heart, and have had it explained to you. But can you honestly say you have ever learned it thoroughly, or that you fully understood the explanation given, and that in the course of years you have forgotten nothing? No one, I think, can say this with truth; but if any one could say so we should reply that there is nothing more useful than to have these explanations brought again clearly and forcibly before our minds, and as we grow older to be helped to see their deeper and wider meaning.

I

Let me, therefore, begin with one of the very first questions: Why did God make you? This is a most natural as well as a most important ques-

tion. Children when they see anything new and strange to them ask at once: What is it for? What are you going to do with it? Why do you want it? What is a knife for? To cut with. What is a pencil for? To write with. What is a spoon for? To eat with. Is it not, therefore, very natural to ask: Why am I in the world? What have I got to do here? What purpose do I serve?

One would imagine that thoughts such as these must occur to every man as soon as he is old enough to reflect at all. The question is not only natural, but also pre-eminently important. So long as I do not understand the use of a thing I really know next to nothing about it. Show a flute to a deaf and dumb man—he has no knowledge of sound, and the flute remains a riddle to him, because he can not understand the use to which it is put. A man who does not know for what purpose he has been brought into this world is an enigma to himself. If he does not know what his end is he can not possibly fulfil it. A man who neither knows nor fulfils his end is fundamentally a failure. A man who can not give a clear and decisive answer to the question, "Why am I in this world?"—even should he have counted the stars and probed all the secrets of nature—knows absolutely nothing.

Let us, then, look for an answer to this primary and most important question: What is our end in life? We may help ourselves to get at the true answer if we determine, first, what it is not. Have we power to choose it? There are many things in which choice is free: our dwelling-place, our business, our undertakings, our journeys. But can we

choose in the same way what our last end is to be? Whether it shall be high or low, of the earth earthy or soaring above the stars? No, that we can not do. And why not? Because in this matter we are not our own masters. If we would go to the root of the matter, it is simply because we are creatures.

The potter out of wet and plastic clay molds a vase. When it is finished to whom does it belong? Who is to decide its fate—whether it shall be destroyed or preserved, whether it shall be put to noble or base uses, whether the potter shall keep it for himself, or shall sell it, or give it away? All this the potter himself must decide. The vase is his own work, and belongs to him. Well, now, are we ourselves the authors of our own being? On the contrary, our body and soul are the work of the almighty hand of God. We are His creatures and entirely dependent upon Him. It is therefore not for us to decide what our end in life is to be, but for Him who is our master. And He *has* decided it. He says of mankind: "I have created him for My glory; I have formed him, and made him" (*Is.* xliii. 7). We must, therefore, give glory to God with our understanding, by endeavoring to apprehend Him and His perfections. All the powers of our soul and body must glorify Him by striving to do His holy will, that is, by keeping His commandments; we must also work for Him by making His glory our highest aim and our greatest happiness. We are in this world to know God, to love Him, and to serve Him. This is the end which God Himself has appointed for us.

Moreover, the final end of man can not be found on earth, for, if it were, then it would consist in some one or other of the good things of this world. Now what is it that this world has to offer us? Treasures, riches, possessions—the lust of the eyes. Comfort, pleasure, amusement—the lust of the flesh. Honors, distinctions, a great name—the pride of life. Let us pile all these things together—although as a rule the pursuit of one of them will be found to exclude the others—but even taking them all together, could they form our true and final end? I say no, they could not, and I hope to prove this conclusively. The real end of man must be such, that not only a few, but the greater number of mankind may be able to reach it. Very well, then; suppose the competition to begin. Suppose every one to give himself up to the pursuit of wealth, of money, and money's equivalents. What is the result? A few millionaires; but from the beginning to the end of the world the majority of men will have to scramble every day for the crust of bread which keeps the wolf from the door. Suppose them all to run after pleasure and enjoyment. A few may secure it, but what of the sick, the suffering, the dying? They can not possibly attain their end if it consist in the joys of this earth. Suppose every one to join in the race for worldly honors. How many are successful enough to be recognized and acknowledged by the world, to have a monument raised to them, to live in history? Only a few, a very few. Take a palpable illustration of this. How many thousands or even hundreds of thousands have lived during the last two or

three hundred years in my own native town, and have been buried perhaps in the same cemetery? What do we know about them? Did they amass great earthly treasure? No. Were they even able to live lives of pleasure? Quite the contrary. Did any of them make a great name? We should be hard put to it to recall a single one from amongst them were their names not carved upon their tombstones or their mortuary cards posted at the church door. Clearly, then, if the end of man consists in earthly happiness, in the treasures, joys, and honors of the world, we must admit that our forefathers—most of them, at all events—did not attain that end, that they lived in vain. But if we open an old newspaper and read that "so and so died on such and such a day, of such and such a year, fortified with all the sacraments of the Church," then we must allow that all the same he did attain that end. For through death he has reached the goal he hoped for, which was to dwell, beyond earth and time, with God for all eternity. This is an end which can be attained by all, provided they are men of good will.

But let it be conceded for a moment that man's end is here on this earth. Then we can only say that it is an end which can never content us, nor satisfy the heart. Think of Solomon, the wise king! How great were his possessions! His ships brought him gold from distant lands, and he tells us that he allowed himself every gratification that his heart desired. His name was famous at home and abroad. It lives now and will live for all time. And what has he to say about all this earthly happiness? That all is

vanity and vexation of spirit. History recalls that Alexander the Great, who while still a young man had conquered half the world, on coming to the shores of the sea wept like a child. Why? Because the sea set a boundary to his ambition and because all he had already acquired was not enough to satisfy him. No, this world is not big enough to be the final end of an immortal soul. It would be an unworthy end, and one which would leave us no better off than the beasts. It is only those who assert that man's life ends with death who can propose earthly happiness as his goal. The Holy Scriptures put into the mouths of certain men words like these: "Come therefore and let us enjoy the good things that are present, and let us speedily use the creatures as in youth. Let us fill ourselves with costly wine and ointments, and let not the flower of the time pass by us. Let us crown ourselves with roses before they be withered; let no meadow escape our riot. Let none of us go without his part in luxury; let us everywhere leave tokens of joy, for this is our portion and this our lot," i.e., our goal or end.

But who are they who speak so? Those who assert that the body returns to dust, that the soul dissolves into thin air, that life melts away like a mist, a cloud, a shadow. It is clear that those who place men's goal here below must also deny the existence of an eternal God and an immortal soul.

But just as it is true that God exists and that the soul is immortal, so also it is true that our last end lies beyond this world and in God. We are here on earth to know God, to love Him, and

to serve Him, and by these means to reach heaven. To know God is the beginning of the way. His love and service are the steps by which we plod along the path which leads to the end. To be united to God, to live with God, by God, in God, that is the end itself. In this way God is glorified and the creature made happy. When we consider it in this light, this world is not the end, but the battle-field where the victory is won, the scene of our labors where the reward is earned, the road along which we struggle until we come to the goal.

II

We have been created to know, to love and serve God in this world that we may be happy with Him for ever in the next. The terms of this answer recall the principal headings into which the catechism is divided.

The first thing required to attain our end is to know God. By reason and reflection we can come to recognize the existence of a God, just as we can see the stars with the naked eye. But if we want to know the Lord our God, His perfections and His works more fully and completely, then just as an astronomer makes use of the telescope to study the firmament more closely, so must we accept some extrinsic aid, which is supplied by God's revelation about Himself. For this reason the first part of the catechism treats of faith.

In order to attain our end we must love and serve God. We do this in so far as we keep His commandments. The second part of the catechism, therefore, deals with the Commandments.

But it is beyond our poor strength, always and under all circumstances to have perfect faith, and to keep the Commandments. To do this we need the help of God's grace, which we obtain chiefly by prayer and the holy sacraments. The third part of the catechism treats therefore of the means of grace.

Faith, the Commandments, and the Means of Grace, are the headings of the three principal divisions of the catechism, with all of which we must be well acquainted if we are to work out our salvation. The catechism, then, contains the three points, which are of the highest importance to us, which we can never know and understand too well, and the meaning of which should be as dear to us as our eternal welfare. "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?" What shall it profit us, indeed, to know all the stars of heaven, all the concerns of men, all the secrets of nature, if we do not understand that which will lead us to our end?

Let us conclude with a prayer that God may give to me the grace to instruct you rightly, and to you so to receive these instructions that they may help you to eternal salvation. Amen.

## SERMON II

### Faith

*"He hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light"* (1 *Peter* ii. 9).

I

From our consideration on the end of man, which was the theme of our instruction last Sunday, we saw that Faith, the Commandments, and the Means of Grace, form the principal subject-matter of the catechism.

We propose in our discourse to-day to take the first of these three divisions, and with the help of the Holy Ghost to consider it under two heads:

I. The nature of faith.
II. The object of faith.

The catechism seeks to define our conception of faith by asking, "What is faith," and the answer runs: "Faith is a theological virtue by which we firmly believe the truths which God has revealed."

Faith, therefore, consists in believing. Every kind of human knowledge rests on a foundation of belief in something, but the question before us is to differentiate between knowledge founded on faith, and every other kind of human knowledge. Around us we see many different classes of objects, animals, plants, minerals. Among animals we distinguish the birds of the air, the fish in the sea, and all those brute-beasts which live on land. In speaking thus, we are classifying them

according to the regions they inhabit. Again, amongst the stars we have fixed stars, which do not move, planets, which revolve more or less regularly round the sun, and comets, whose orbit is more uncertain. Now, just as we classify those things which are outside us, so must we deal with the things that are within us. But on what lines is our classification to be made? This I will endeavor to show. In all knowledge something has to be accepted as true. That belongs to the very nature of knowledge. But for what reason is it accepted as true? If we keep that question well before our mind it will give us the right basis upon which to work.

When Columbus and his companions after a long voyage at last reached land, and disembarked in America for the first time, they at that moment certainly believed in the New World. They believed in it because they had seen it with their eyes and trodden it with their feet. They trusted the evidence of their senses. But Columbus himself had been already long and firmly convinced of the reality of its existence. What had convinced him? Had any one told him of it? No one. The possibility of such a thing had barely been surmised. Columbus from his own observations had drawn his conclusions. He had seen some strange flotsam brought in by the westerly wind to the shores of Europe, pieces of wood curiously carved and of a kind hitherto unknown. The sea could not have produced these, he reasoned to himself; the unfamiliar wood must be the product of some far-off undiscovered country whose inhabitants have done the carving. In this

way, pondering over these pieces of wood, he found evidence to persuade him of the existence of America, just as when we see smoke ascending from a chimney we feel sure there is a fire burning inside, although we have not seen it. But to continue: Columbus with his companions returned to Europe to the court of King Ferdinand, and there, to the amazement of all who heard them, they told of the wonderful country they had discovered on the other side of the ocean, and of the strange varieties of plants, animals, and men they had found there. Now, did Ferdinand and his court really credit all this? Certainly they did. On what grounds did they credit it? They had not, like Christopher and his companions, seen it with their own eyes, nor had they proved, as he had done, the likelihood of its existence by their own logical reasoning. Not at all. Then why did they assume that it was all true? Because Columbus, who was an honorable and conscientious man, bore witness to it with his companions. So Columbus, we observe, had believed in America before seeing it because he had found evidence of its existence; his companions believed because they had beheld it with their own eyes; and Ferdinand and his court believed simply on the testimony of Columbus.

Now I am able to show you exactly in what Faith consists. In a strict and proper sense we have faith only when we accept as true something we have neither seen for ourselves, nor deduced from our own observations; in other words, when we hold something to be true which another person has told us, and indeed because he has told

us. This kind of knowledge which we get by relying on the word of some one else, figures very largely, more largely indeed than any other, in the sum total of human learning. All that we know of the past, of distant countries and people, rests on faith. How could children be educated unless they accepted as true what their parents tell them? How would pupils ever learn who refused to believe the word of their teacher? How could history be written if we did not admit the credibility of earlier chroniclers? How could a judge come to a decision unless he trusted the testimony given by witnesses under oath?

I am saying, then, that one kind of human knowledge consists in believing what trustworthy people have told us. Here we have faith in the secular sense of the word. Faith in the Christian sense consists in our believing what the Lord God has said or revealed to us. And surely if it be in the nature of things to believe what people worthy of confidence tell us, how much more firmly, more uncompromisingly, more unswervingly, may we believe what God tells us. For God knows all things. He is the very truth, who can neither deceive nor be deceived. It is on the eternal truth and infallible veracity of God and on His infinite holiness that we found our faith in all that He tells us. Faith, therefore, "is a theological virtue by which we firmly believe the truths which God has revealed."

II

We now go on to ask what are the propositions or truths which we are bound to believe? We are bound to believe everything without exception that

God has revealed. But has God addressed each one of us? Has He spoken to you, to me, to them, to all of us? Not to each one of us individually, but to certain special groups of men and through them to all the rest. To whom, then, has God spoken and by whom? Under the Old Law God made His revelations to men through the patriarchs and prophets. The patriarchs, such as Adam and Noah, were the fathers of the human race, or else, like Abraham, the head of one particular people. The prophets were men specially enlightened by God and given by Him a special mission to mankind. Under the New Law God has revealed Himself through His Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, and through the apostles, who were His first disciples and the earliest teachers of the Church.

And all that God has revealed, whether under the Old, or under the New, Law, has been preserved, proclaimed, and proposed to us by the Church. Therefore, faith, in the Christian sense, means to believe without doubting the truths that God has revealed, and communicated to us through His Church.

What, then, is the subject-matter of God's revelation to us? What does it contain? With what does it deal? Is it with questions of agriculture, or geography, or with the secrets and forces of nature? It is concerned with none of these things, and when mention of them occurs it is merely to illustrate by way of parable or simile some lesson which it is necessary to bring home to us, as, for instance, when our Saviour speaks of the vineyard, or of the draught of fishes. So, again, we

ask, what is the subject-matter of the truths revealed to us by God? They contain everything, absolutely everything which we require to know for our eternal salvation. Oh, what a multitude of great and weighty matters God has unfolded to us concerning Himself and the Godhead, His perfections, His works, and the creation of the world—things that the most perfect telescope ever invented by man would fail to bring within the range of human eyes—the origin of our first parents, the beauty of their primary state, their first home in Paradise—their temptation, their sin and misery! Then comes the human race with the history of its many wanderings, enterprises, and retributions, of the chosen people of God, their patriarchs and prophets, kings and judges, and, finally, their rejection and downfall. Above all, we learn of the life, sufferings, and glory of Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man for us, His apostles, His Church, His sacraments—the end of the world, the judgment, and our own eternal destiny—heaven or hell.

Oh, what a multitude of divine truths the revelation of God embraces! How it lights up the past and radiates into the future! How much it makes known to us which it would have baffled all the discernment and wit of man to discover! God's knowledge is infinite. He reveals to us many things which we can not and never will understand in this world, and, because His wisdom surpasses ours in such an infinite degree, we must believe all He tells us, and hold it to be true, not because we understand it, but because an all-holy and omniscient God has revealed it to us. This

is the foundation on which we Catholics build our faith.

Let us thank the Lord our God, who has called us, as St. Peter says, "out of the darkness into His marvelous light"—out of unbelief, which is truly a groping in darkness. For what does the unbeliever know, either of where he came from, or whither he is going? He is enveloped in a gloom which all the electric light in the world, be it ever so powerful, is unable to dispel; he has no assurance of what awaits him after death, no knowledge of the pitfalls which lurk on the road, no conception of the fearful abyss of hell. He is blind in the light of day.

Let us, indeed, thank God, who has called us out of the darkness into His wonderful light, who not only illumines the way we have to go, but in His merciful love treads it with us. It is that same road on which mankind had traveled since the beginning of the world, and will ever travel, the very ground over which, with its heights and depths, its hills and hollows, its dangers and ultimate goal, you yourselves, each one of you, have to make your earthly pilgrimage.

We will say with the Psalmist: "Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my paths" (*Ps.* cxviii. 105). Yes, Lord, faith will be the light to guide my feet on the long, weary, and thorny road that may perhaps still lie before me. Grant that this light may never grow dim in my heart, but let it burn so brightly that I may not only know the way, but may walk in it; may not only see the dangers, but may shun them; that I may not only recognize the goal, but may attain it—life everlasting. Amen.

## SERMON III

### Holy Scripture

*"All scripture inspired of God is profitable to teach"* (*2 Tim.* iii. 16).

We have seen that faith in the Christian sense is a theological virtue by which we firmly believe the truths which God has revealed. God's revelations to man were made under the Old Law through the patriarchs and prophets, and under the New Law through Jesus Christ and His apostles. But the age of the patriarchs and the prophets, the days of Christ and His apostles, have long since past away. Whole centuries, and even many centuries, have elapsed since then. Where are we now to look if we want to find God's revelation, or in other words, how shall we be able to know the things which we must believe? I answer that divine revelation is contained partly in the Bible, and partly in the teaching of tradition. Hence, it reaches us through two channels; that portion which is written comes to us through Holy Scripture, and, on the other hand, those truths not recorded in writing are preserved for us by the verbally transmitted traditions of the Church.

In our discourse to-day we will concern ourselves only with Holy Scripture, and under the guidance of the Holy Ghost we will consider,

I. What Holy Scripture is.
II. How is it divided?

I

What, then, is Holy Scripture? By Holy Scripture we mean those books which have been written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and which are recognized by the Church as containing the word of God.

The Holy Scripture, therefore, is not a single book written in one and the same language, by one individual author. No, it is made up of a multitude of books, and of books differing very widely in character. Some are by Moses, some by Samuel, David, and Solomon, and other different prophets and their disciples. From this great diversity it is apparent that these different books can neither have been written at the same time, nor in the same country, nor in the same tongue. The earliest book of Holy Scripture, namely, Genesis, the first book of Moses, was written more than fifteen hundred years before Christ; and the last, the Apocalypse of St. John, was composed nearly a hundred years after Christ; so that from first to last we get a period of sixteen hundred years. Most of the Old Testament was originally in Hebrew, and the greater part of the New Testament was written in Greek. The contents of these different books are very various. Some relate Bible history, others consist of proverbs and sayings, others contain canticles, warnings, and admonitions; some are concerned with the past, others again with the future. So we have a number of books, written by different people, in various places and languages, and very unlike each other as to their size and contents. But, you will ask, why should they all be classed

together, be treated as making up one whole, and called the Book of Books, the Holy Bible? They are bound up as one and the same volume, read and expounded as one. Why? Because although so different they are in one particular all the same. Pre-eminent among all books that exist or ever have existed, or ever will exist, written by men for men, and in human language, still they are to be distinguished from all others, because they are the outcome of the direct inspiration of the Holy Ghost. The holy men who wrote them were inspired to do so by the Holy Spirit, who enlightened and instructed them in what they wrote, and who preserved them from all error. These books are really divine in the fullest sense of the word, for they have their origin in the mind of God. If I were to take a lad and urge him to write something, and egg him on, and if into the bargain I were to sketch out for him what he was to write, and then to stay by him, to save him from any possible mistakes, the document when finished, although in the boy's handwriting, would in reality be my work.

Therefore, the different books of the Bible are all alike in this, that they are all written under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. But that is not their only distinguishing mark—there is another point of similarity between them—they are all recognized by the Church to be the word of God. Let us suppose that a book is written, a good pious work, and the author claims to have composed it under the inspiration of God. Is that sufficient to constitute it part of Holy Scripture?

Not at all; if that were so, the Holy Scriptures would increase in bulk day by day, and nobody could say where they would end. We must have a reliable witness to testify to God's word and tell us where to find it, and such a witness is the Church. An illustration may help to make my meaning clear.

A rich man dies leaving an immense fortune, but no children to inherit it. To whom is it to go? That must depend entirely, must it not, on what is in the will? A will is found, but is it a valid will? That again depends on the signature. Certainly; but the signature is found to be there in due order; now everything would seem to be plain sailing. No, we still have to inquire if the signature is genuine. Oh! surely it is; it is his own hand and exactly his way of writing his name. That may be, but forgers, we know, can imitate handwriting most accurately. Now, how is any one to prove whether the signature is genuine or not? From the will? But the validity of the will is exactly what is in question. From the deceased himself? But he is dead. How then? By means of witnesses. Did the deceased in his lifetime read over his will to any friends or sign it in their presence, or has he left any kind of formal record which would go to establish the authenticity of the signature? If so, there is no difficulty at all, for witnesses are forthcoming to testify to its genuineness. In this very same way the Church bears testimony that the books which make up the Holy Scriptures contain the word of God. By Holy Scripture, therefore, we mean those books which have been written under the

direct inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and which the Church testifies to be the word of God.

II

Now let us go on to consider how the Scriptures are divided. Into how many parts? The Scriptures are divided into the Old and the New Testament. The word "Testament" signifies a compact or covenant. Before the coming of Christ God made a covenant with the patriarchs, and later on with the people of Israel. That was the covenant of the Old Law, and the books in which it is set forth are called the Old Testament. But through Jesus Christ God made a new and more merciful covenant with mankind, and the history of this new covenant is called the New Testament.

If we open the Old Testament we shall find twenty-one books relating to Bible history; seven books containing moral teaching, and seventeen books of prophecy. The five books of Moses, for instance, and the books of Kings contain the Bible history; the Psalms, Proverbs, and the Book of Wisdom, moral principles; and the books of Isaias, Jeremias, Ezechiel, and Daniel, the prophecies.

The New Testament consists of the four Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; the Acts of the Apostles written by St. Luke; the fourteen epistles of St. Paul addressed to different communities, and to a few private individuals; and the seven epistles of the other apostles: one of St. James, two of St. Peter, three of St. John, and one of St. Jude; and, finally, the Apocalypse of St. John.

The four Gospels are placed rightly quite at the

beginning of the book. "Gospel" in English means the good message and corresponds to the Greek word "Evangel," which also signifies good tidings. Why do they bear this name? Because they bring to us the most blessed of all good tidings. Tidings of the Incarnation of the Son of God and of His life and teaching, His sufferings and death, of the kingdom which He instituted here on earth, and of His ascension into heaven.

The four Gospels comprise, therefore, the whole life of Christ on earth. But this does not mean that each Gospel deals with a separate section, so that one would contain a story of His childhood and youth, another an account of His public life, a third the details of His suffering, and the fourth a description of His resurrection and glory. No, they are not written in that way, and no one Gospel contains either all His teaching, nor another all His miracles, and so on. In all four Gospels the whole life of Christ is put before us, told over in different words, sometimes more briefly, sometimes at greater length, as though the same person was being reflected before our eyes in four different mirrors. We frequently see pictures of the four Evangelists, and usually they are represented by some sign or emblem by which we can recognize them. Matthew has the sign of a man's face, Mark has the lion, Luke the ox, and John the eagle. Artists of all kinds, both painters and sculptors, are never tired of picturing these four signs. What is their signification? It is interesting to know these things, though of course not essential.

It is said that these four signs are taken from the vision of the prophet Ezechiel before the throne of God, where he saw the four living creatures: "And as for the likeness of their faces; there was the face of a man and the face of a lion on the right side of all the four; and the face of an ox on the left side of all the four, and the face of an eagle over all the four" (*Ezech.* i. 10). And further on he says, "whither the impulse of the spirit was to go, thither they went" (*Ezech.* i. 12).

It needs no great stretch of the imagination to apply this as being a type of the four Evangelists in whom the spirit of God worked, and inspired them in the writing of their Gospels; and on the feasts of the Evangelists the Church has, no doubt with a purpose, ordained these portions of Ezechiel to be read. Without in any way rejecting this interpretation, there is another suggestive explanation attached to these emblems by St. Jerome. He considers them to have reference to the beginning of each of the four Gospels. The Gospel of St. Matthew begins with the birth of Christ, an infant in the manger, so St. Matthew is known by the face of the man-child. St. Mark begins with the sermon of St. John in the desert, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness." It is the lion who raises his voice in the wilderness in such an awe-inspiring way, so St. Mark's symbol is the lion. St. Luke begins with the sacrifice of Zacharias; therefore beside St. Luke we have the ox, which was the most frequently used as a sacrifice. St. John opens his Gospel by raising us up from this earth to heaven, from time to

eternity, to the begetting of the Eternal Son by the Father. "In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God." Like the eagle, who, by a few strokes of his wings, leaves this earth and soars beyond the clouds into the immeasurable heights of the firmament, St. John, in a word or two, transports us into eternity. So he is symbolized by the eagle.

But what we specially set out to consider in relation to the Holy Scriptures, their substance and their various parts, is their relation to God. They contain the revelation of God and for this reason their every word and phrase is to be held in reverence. This lesson is taught us by the Church, both by the solemn incensing of the book before the singing of the Gospel, and by the rubric that in every Mass, before he reads it, the priest shall say this special prayer, "Cleanse my heart and my lips, O almighty God, who didst cleanse the lips of the prophet Isaias with a burning coal, that I may worthily and in a becoming manner proclaim Thy Holy Gospel." The faithful, also, as a token of reverence for God's word, rise up, and sign forehead, mouth, and breast, with the sign of the cross, to show that they receive it with their mind, confess it with their lips, and love it with their heart. The Holy Scriptures used to be written in letters of gold and silver, and bound in a gold and silver cover, inlaid with ivory and set with precious stones; so great was the reverence felt for God's word. Many of the martyrs shed their blood to save the Holy Books from falling into the hands of the heathen. St. Charles Borromeo never read them but on his knees, and many holy

men have spent their entire lives in studying them, meditating upon them, translating, expounding, and defending them. Is it too much to ask of Christians that they shall never in any way profane these holy words, or use them lightly or irreverently for oath or jest? "All Scripture inspired of God is profitable to teach" (2 *Tim.* iii. 16). Amen.

## SERMON IV

### Tradition

*"Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you have learned, whether by our word, or by our epistle"* (2 *Thess.* ii. 14).

The revelation of God reaches us through two channels: the Holy Scriptures and the verbally transmitted tradition of the Church. We have just seen in what Holy Scripture consists—that it is composed of a number of books which are of different kinds, but which have all two important features in common—the first that they are written under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and the second that they are recognized by the Church as being the word of God. The whole of Holy Scripture is comprised in the Old and the New Testaments. There can be no question that we must believe Holy Scripture—it contains the word of God. But, we might ask, is that not enough? The Catholic Church says no, that is not enough; we must also believe the teaching of tradition. From this arise two questions which with the help of the Holy Spirit we will endeavor to answer:

I. What is tradition?
II. Why must we believe its teaching?

#### I

What do we understand by tradition? By tradition we understand those revealed truths which

were taught by the apostles, but of which they left no written record.

Tradition therefore consists of revealed truths, that means truths revealed by God. In this respect it may be considered in the same light as Holy Scripture, which also consists of truths revealed by God. Where, then, lies the difference between Scripture and tradition? Holy Scripture does not contain all God's revealed truths, but only those which under the Old Law and later on were preserved in writing by the apostles. Neither does tradition contain all the truths revealed by God, but only those which, though taught by the apostles, were never by them committed to writing—briefly, the Scripture is the written and tradition the unwritten word of God. Taken together, Scripture and tradition contain the whole treasure of God's revelation, the entire word of God. They hang together and supplement each other; they mutually explain one another, what is obscure in the one becoming clear in the other.

It is a simple matter to trace how tradition grew up quite naturally. For three years our blessed Saviour preached almost without intermission. Are we to suppose that everything He said was compressed into the four Gospels which can easily be read through in a few hours? Is it probable that His every word was written down, when numbers of His miracles were left unrecorded? St. John tells us at the end of his Gospel, "But there are many other things which Jesus did which, if they were written every one, the world itself I think would not be able to contain the books that should be written" (*John* xxi. 25).

Can we conceive the apostles allowing a portion of Our Lord's teaching to escape their memory, or their deliberately passing over both in their teaching and in their writings a great part of those things which they recollected Our Lord to have said and done? The one is not possible, for Our Lord promised that the Holy Ghost "would bring to your minds whatsoever I shall have said to you"; and to entertain the idea of the other would be sheer blasphemy. So it resolves itself into this: our Saviour did and said many things which are not written in Scripture, but which the apostles proclaimed by word of mouth and preached, and that in this way an unwritten tradition sprang up. When we speak of an unwritten tradition, however, we do not mean that what belongs to tradition has never at any time been written down; tradition has been put on record, only not by the apostles and not in the writings of Holy Scripture. For this reason it is called the unwritten word of God.

II

The answer to our second question—why must the teaching of tradition be believed as fully and firmly as that of Holy Scripture—is not hard to find. On what grounds do we believe the Scriptures? Is it on account of their being in writing? Not in the least, but because they are the word of God. Well, if tradition be also God's word it must be believed just as firmly as what is written. This reason is so simple, yet so forcible, that for many hundreds of years the authority of tradition was never called into question. It was not

until the sixteenth century that the great schism arose, the leaders of which, however much they contradicted each other on other subjects, agreed in rejecting tradition. Christians were to believe what the Bible taught, and everything for which they could not find chapter and verse they were free to put aside as the invention of man. Sacraments, dogma, instruction, or teaching not to be found in the Bible they threw over. The propounders of this heresy by acting in this way remind one of the man who declared the only necessary part of his house to be the bricks, so he proceeded to get rid of the windows and doors, to tear off the roof, and remove the staircase, till the house at last became uninhabitable and fell in.

Further than this, this teaching contradicts:

(a) History. From when do we consider the Church dates its existence? It might be said to have sprung into life when our Saviour chose His twelve apostles, or when He called Peter to be the head of it. Any one who looks upon these dates as being too early must admit it at the latest to have been in existence at Pentecost, when St. Peter preached and converted and baptized 3,000 souls. I think there can be no doubt that the first congregation founded and taught by St. Peter possessed the truth in all its fulness and purity. Now did these early Christians accept only what they found in the Scriptures? Think well over your answer; remember not a word of the New Testament had then been written, neither Gospels nor Epistles. Is it not obvious that they must have believed more than was written in the

Bible? Is it not abundantly clear that they accepted everything the apostles taught them, and we know how many congregations were founded, how many nations were converted, how deeply the Christian faith had taken root before the New Testament came to be written. The early Christians believed on the authority of tradition, and whoever denies it contradicts

(b) The apostles and our Saviour Himself. What mandate would Christ have given to the apostles if He had meant the Christian religion to rest only on His written word? Would He not have charged them: "Write, write down everything that you hear Me say or that you see Me do. Copy it scores and hundreds of scores of times, and circulate it throughout all the nations of the world; everything you record in writing is to be believed, but what you only deliver by word of mouth is to be thrown to the winds." But our Lord did not say one syllable of all this, on the contrary: "Go ye and teach all nations. . . . Go ye into the whole world and teach all creatures. . . ." Their mission was to teach and to preach, and this was the sense in which the apostles themselves interpreted Our Lord's words; they went forth into the world and one and all conscientiously labored to accomplish the task set them. Now, if their mission was to write and carefully preserve a record of what they had seen and heard, then six of them at any rate made no attempt whatever to fulfill it, for not one syllable of theirs is to be found in Scripture. Of the six others of whom we do find a record, we can only say they did their work in a very half-

hearted manner. What St. Jude wrote would not fill more than a medium-sized sheet of paper; St. Peter wrote but two epistles, St. James but one. Can this be regarded as a fulfilment of their life's work?

(c) Those who reject tradition are at variance with the Scriptures themselves. For if Christian belief is to have as its sole foundation the words of Holy Scripture, nothing more nor less, then we should expect instructions to that effect to be clearly conveyed in Holy Writ. We find, on the contrary, nothing of the kind; St. Paul says: "Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you have learnt whether by word or by our epistle" (2 *Thess.* ii. 14). They were to stand fast and hold what they had learned! What had they learned? St. Paul had instructed them both by his preaching and by his epistles; so, evidently, they were enjoined to hold to both, and to believe the spoken word as firmly as the written teaching.

(d) But, even yet, we have not quite finished. Whoever asserts that though we are bound to believe all that was written in the Scriptures, we are free to reject what tradition teaches, will soon go a step further and discard the Scriptures themselves. We should like to know how the following question is to be met? Upon what authority do we accept the Scriptures? Not upon their own authority, but upon that of tradition. It is tradition which tells us what is to be accounted Scripture and what is not. It is tradition which stands pledged that these books have weathered the storms of so many hundreds of years, and passed

through so many different hands without having suffered either change or falsification, curtailment, or interpolation. And, finally, what key do we possess to the meaning of Holy Scripture, for without explanation it is a dead letter, a book from which we can gather no account of its origin, its antiquity, its significance, whose leaves are, so to speak, blown about by every breeze, and to no purpose. But, united to the teaching of tradition, what does it become? A treasure of priceless worth, the breath of the Holy Spirit; given by the Holy Spirit to that Church of which He is himself the guide; and by her defended, protected, and guarded.

We are bound, therefore, to believe both the written word of God contained in Holy Scripture, and also the verbally transmitted truths which make up tradition, so far at least as the Holy Catholic Church proposes them to our belief.

## SERMON V

### The Necessity of Faith

*"Without faith it is impossible to please God"* (*Heb.* xi. 6).

FAITH is a divine virtue by which we firmly believe the truths which God has revealed. These revelations we find in Holy Scripture, and in the verbally transmitted tradition of the Church, or, in other words, in the written and unwritten word of God. We have reached so far in our instructions.

The next point is to consider the necessity of faith. Is faith necessary for mankind? To that question we reply: Yes, faith is necessary for mankind, and we will go further and add that it is also a source of happiness. We propose, with the help of the Holy Ghost, to examine briefly these two statements.

I

Faith is necessary, but to what end? Certainly, in order to lead a comfortable and enjoyable life, faith is not only unnecessary, but it is a positive hindrance and drawback. It is with regard to eternal life, if we wish to save our souls, that faith is necessary. But, we ask, how far is it necessary? Faith is so indispensably necessary that just as we must have air in order to breathe and nothing in the world can supply the need of it, so, if we wish to be saved, we must have faith.

But, what grounds have we for representing faith as so imperatively essential to salvation? It must suffice that our Saviour Himself spoke in the most decisive way of the necessity of faith. "He that believeth not shall be condemned," and, again, "He that believeth not is already judged." Why should he be already judged? Because, unbelief is in itself a sin so grievous that it is alone sufficient to condemn a soul. There is no gainsaying Our Lord's own words. By their sin our first parents lost for themselves and their descendants the grace of God and their right to eternal life. They were already judged—all were children of wrath. Then our Saviour came and by His sufferings and death opened once more for us the source of grace and the gate of heaven. He reversed, so to speak, the judgment pronounced upon us. But, in order to participate in this merciful sentence we must keep ourselves in close union with our Saviour, and the first connecting link in the chain is to believe in Him, His works, His merits, and His Church. Therefore, the unbeliever remains still under the ban pronounced by God in Paradise, and is already judged. St. Paul confirms this statement of Our Lord when he says: "Without faith it is impossible to please God."

In the face of these very clear, grave, and unequivocal statements made by our Saviour and His apostles, the objections brought against the necessity of faith for salvation, by unbelievers or those who are lukewarm and indifferent, can carry but little weight. But, let us see what they advance against it. They say: "A man's life is

of more importance than what he believes. It is quite possible to lead a good life without faith. An unbeliever can be an honorable man.'' Let us sift this argument.

What do we mean by leading a good life? I suppose it means doing our duty. Well, certainly, there have been many unbelievers who have faithfully acquitted themselves of all their responsibilities toward their fellow-men, who did not murder, or commit adultery, or steal, neither did they lie nor break their word nor calumniate others. Though unbelievers, they are thoroughly honorable men in the eyes of the world. But does a man owe no duty to God? In the ten commandments the duties of man toward God Himself are given the first place. For as truly as God exists and we are His creatures, so truly are we subject to Him, and He can not Himself without stultifying His own word release us from this subjection and dependence. What remains, then, for a man to do in the face of God's clearly expressed and confirmed statement, but to accept and believe His word; and if he refuse to believe he offends God, and denies His truth; he sins—he violates his primary and most essential duty, and though to the world he may pass as a man of honor he does not deceive the eye of God.

Moreover, it is greatly to be doubted whether an unbeliever can be expected to be always faithful to his duty under all circumstances when it happens to be of a painful nature. How will he act when no eye sees him, when considerations of honor, name, or public opinion are not at stake; when there are no police, no tribunals, no punish-

ments to fear; when self-interest calls or passion possesses him? The remembrance of God will not hold him back, nor will the thought of hell strike fear into his heart. He has no faith; the so-called man of honor will not be equal to the occasion. All is not gold that glitters, and mere gilding, bright as it may appear, will not stand much wear and tear. An unbeliever may have the semblance of an honorable man, but in the hour of temptation and passion his apparent virtue will not endure.

II

If faith is a necessity it is equally a source of happiness. Food is essential to life, and tastes sweet to a hungry man, even though it be but a crust of bread. It is true we come from dust, and the unbeliever asserts we are dust and nothing more; and, if this is so, then as the end of all things we see only the grave waiting to receive us. How comfortless to feel and say: "Nothing remains for me but the tomb!" What a consolation to know that beyond this world our eternal home awaits us. "Where death shall be no more."

By our bodies we are related to the beasts, but the unbeliever would make this relationship much closer when he asserts that we are merely highly developed animals of a better and more intelligent kind. For, if we be animals even of the most perfect species, and nothing more, then we are at the same time the most miserable of beings. The lower animals are at all events never haunted with memories of the past, nor with dread of the

future, nor do they feel the cares and sorrows of the present pressing on them as we do. If we are but highly developed animals then we have good reason to envy the brutes, for they are happier, or at least less unhappy, than we. How blessed is faith that raises us above all this lower creation and says to us: You possess an immortal soul which was made for God and is destined to eternal blessedness. Can an animal think or speak or laugh or repent? No. Neither can it kneel down in God's presence and adore Him, nor love Him nor serve Him. Man by his understanding and the power of speech which he possesses is placed on an incomparably higher plane than the brute-beasts; but it is the faith that is in him which raises him to a pinnacle above them and which shows him the grandeur of his ultimate end and destiny.

We came from the dust, we are akin to the beasts, but we are also closely related to our fellow creatures. It has been said that man is the worst enemy of his fellow man, and in our own day a certain very celebrated and widely read philosopher has written many thick volumes to prove that the weakest must go to the wall, that might is right, that the fittest must survive. Horrible doctrine, the outcome of unbelief! How much sweeter is the teaching of faith which emphasizes every tie which binds us to our fellow men and makes us brothers, all created by God and for God. How cheering it is to realize that numbers of human beings are living a life of faith, as we are, with the same convictions, and the same hopes, and are aiming at the same goal, so that

we need not feel utterly lonely and desolate in this miserable world.

Through our souls we are related to the angels. It is true that we are lower than they, but there is joy in the consciousness that they watch over us and there is consolation in the knowledge that we, too, shall one day be admitted to the home which is already theirs. Finally, we partake by sanctifying grace of the nature of God Himself, our highest good. O blessed faith, can there be anything greater for man than to be united with God? But how can such a union come about? Have you never observed two people meeting again after a lengthy absence or saying farewell for a long period of time? They throw their arms round each other, and cling together, and clasp hands as though they could never bear to part. In the two powers of the soul, the understanding and the will, we possess arms and hands, so to speak, with which we may stretch out to reach God and unite ourselves to Him. We can embrace Him with our understanding by believing firmly all He teaches us; this is the arm of faith. We can clasp Him with our will by submitting in all things to Him and giving Him the love of our heart. Our joy and glory on earth, our comfort in life, our hope in death is to hold God with the arms of faith and love and remain united to Him for all eternity. Amen.

## SERMON VI

### The Qualities of Faith

*"Faith without works is dead"* (*James* ii. 20).
*"Stand fast in the faith"* (1 *Cor.* xvi. 13).

In our last discourse we said that faith was necessary—indispensably necessary—to salvation, and we need hardly add that in making this statement we were speaking of the true faith taught by Jesus Christ. But it is an important matter to know where we are to find this true faith. We find it in the Catholic Church. Christ has not only taught us the truth; He founded an institution, a Church, to promulgate and preserve it. What Church did He found? That one, surely, which, as the Catholic Church alone can do, traces her origin and history right back to Christ and His apostles. All other bodies, whatever be their name, arose more recently. They are all cadets in comparison with the Catholic Church. In many wealthy families the eldest son succeeds to the whole estate, and if a dispute should arise with one of the other sons as to who is the heir, it would be easily settled by referring to their respective birth certificates.

There is but one objection that can be urged against the conclusion that the Catholic Church is the only real heir to the truth of Christ, and it is frequently made use of. Men say: No doubt it is true that the Catholic Church is older than any other, and that in the beginning she possessed

the truth. But in the course of time she deviated more and more widely from her original doctrines and then younger and more modern Churches arose and restored Christ's teaching in all its purity and freshness. This objection is absolutely untenable because Jesus Christ not only founded a Church, but He promised that it should last forever: "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." He further promised that He Himself and the Holy Spirit would dwell with it always when He said: "And behold I am with you always even to the consummation of the world," and "He will abide with you forever."

Could a Church so guided and supported lose the true faith? We can not consider even the possibility of such a thing, for in order to do so one must admit either that Our Lord was mistaken or that He failed to keep His word. Once that is allowed, it follows as the next step that Christ was not truly God; and whoever says so must go the whole way and call the entire Christian religion a myth. If the Catholic Church does not possess the truth, we need not further to seek it; it is not to be found elsewhere.

To sum up: the Faith, the true faith taught by Jesus Christ, is necessary to salvation, and is to be found in the Catholic Church alone.

Essential as it is in itself our faith must have certain qualities if it is to contain for us the germ of eternal life. It must be entire, firm, steadfast, and living. Let us, with the help of the Holy Spirit, consider as shortly as possible the first three of these characteristics.

I

Our faith is to be entire. When is it entire? When we believe not only a part, but all that the Catholic Church proposes to our belief. All the truths of faith have been revealed by the same God, all are therefore equally true; and they are all presented to us by the same Church, so they must all without exception be accepted and believed one as firmly as the other. It is by no means permissible to make a selection, to choose some and to reject others, but this unfortunately is what is only too often done. Many people receive with great alacrity the sweet and consoling doctrine of God's mercy, His patience, His willingness to forgive; they welcome the promise of the unspeakable happiness of heaven. But, suggest to them that He exacts repentance, penance, and that in His inconceivable justice He tolerates a hell to punish eternally, and they are filled with horror and refuse to accept it. Those truths which human intelligence can grasp are to be believed; but those incomprehensible mysteries of faith which our minds can not penetrate we are to be free to throw aside. This is not perfect faith, it is not in its essence faith at all. "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, but offend in one point, is become guilty of all." He who denies one article of faith denies them all. If one stone of an arch loosens and slips the whole arch is wont to collapse. We must believe all that God has revealed and that the Holy Catholic Church proposes to our belief.

Good heavens! some of you may exclaim, what a task, to believe everything which God has re-

vealed and the Church teaches! Why, I don't even know half of it. At school I learned very little and I have forgotten most of that. My intelligence is limited, my memory weak, and I go very seldom to sermons. Can one believe a thing that one does not know? Certainly, one can. Suppose you receive a letter and you see by the writing on the envelope and by the seal that it comes from a friend whom you highly respect and consider to be an absolutely truth-loving person. You know that this friend has been an eye-witness of certain occurrences which the letter details to you. Are you not satisfied that you hold in your hand an authentic and truthful account of all that happened? You believed the contents of the letter really before you read it, before you opened it, or knew what was in it. We must, therefore, believe all that God has revealed, even if we have not complete knowledge of it all.

II

Our faith must be firm. It is firm when we do not wilfully doubt of any article of faith. Firmness is the opposite of doubt, or rather of wilful doubt, for many staunch Christians are frequently troubled and tormented with difficulties. This is not to be wondered at, for the evil spirit knows what he is doing, and when he finds his assaults in other directions make no impression then he seeks to disturb us about the truths of religion. For, if faith, the foundation of the Christian life, be once undermined, the whole structure totters and falls to the ground. Moreover, faith deals with so many unfathomable mys-

teries that it is an easy matter to induce people to call it in question, but as long as these doubts are not voluntary and are not wilfully entertained they are not sin and do not in any way shake the firmness of our faith.

What, then, are we to do if we find ourselves assailed by doubts of one or other article of faith? What should we do if we found a stake or paling not tightly fixed into the earth, but swaying from side to side, to and fro? We should hammer it as hard as we could, driving it deeper and deeper into the ground until the stake stood steady and immovable. So, if doubts against faith trouble you, recall to mind the rock on which your belief is built, namely, the truth of God, which is eternal and never failing, which can not err and can not lie. Say, with all your heart: "My God, I believe all Thou hast revealed; because Thou art the infallible truth I trust Thy word more than my own understanding." Excite in yourself lively sentiments of faith and boldly ignore all temptations against it.

III

Our faith must be steadfast. It is steadfast when we are ready to sacrifice everything, even life itself, rather than give it up.

I read somewhere of a sailor, who, in a battle at sea, caught hold of an enemy's boat with his hand and held it tight so as to give his comrades time to come up and capture it. The enemy yelled at him to let go, but he clung on all the harder; they hurled threats at him, but he stuck to it with all the more determination. They slashed

at his fingers with their swords, but he still grasped the boat with the wounded hand till it was cut right through and then he substituted the other. He preferred to lose both hands rather than to relinquish what he had secured. This must be our attitude toward the Faith. We must choose rather to part with all we have—goods, honors, position, yes, even with life itself sooner than loosen our hold on it.

The holy martyrs are striking examples of this steadfastness. There was no advantage they were not willing to forego, no suffering they would not gladly endure for the sake of the Faith, and the later history of the Church is full of such examples in people of every age, condition, and sex. We are children of the same religion and of the same Church as they, and we ought to be ashamed if we are not ready to follow in their footsteps. We will close our instruction with the resolve to be ready to bear for our faith if necessary the ridicule and contempt of the world, and the slights and disadvantages which even in our day are not infrequently the portion of those who believe. By so doing we shall walk in the blood-stained footsteps of the saints and shall attain with them the reward of the life to come. Amen.

## SERMON VII

### The Confession of Our Faith

*"Every one, therefore, that shall confess Me before men I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven"* (*Matt.* x. 32).

We have seen that our faith must have three qualities. It must be entire, firm, and steadfast, and we considered these qualities in our last instruction. But there is yet something wanting to it—it must be living. This is the last but the most important characteristic of faith, and is productive of two results:

I. That we regulate our life by faith.
II. That we confess our faith.

I

If we have really a living faith our life will be in accordance with it. We can be said to have a living faith only when we regulate our lives in conformity with its teaching, and avoid evil and do good as it lays down for us the course we ought to follow. This is simple and easy to explain. What are the conditions which make us look upon a man as being alive and having life in him? As long as he is able to move, or we find the least sign of activity about him. If he can make the least movement with his hands or his feet, or his tongue or his eyes, he is still alive, and even if we perceive the lightest breath, or the least beat of the heart, we know that he is not

dead; but if absolutely no movement of any kind is to be detected, either in his limbs or lungs, or heart, then we admit that he has passed away.

When can we say that faith is alive? When it exercises any kind of influence on a man's life, or his actions, so as to make him avoid evil and do good, as it requires of him. A firm and deeply rooted conviction of the truths of religion can not fail to manifest itself by outward actions. Picture to yourselves any Christian man in whose heart faith is burning. This faith shows him sin as the greatest and most terrible of all evils. Would it be possible for him to believe that doctrine firmly, and yet to love and delight in sin? On the contrary, a living faith will lead him to repent of his past offenses, and to avoid them in the future. Faith teaches him that God is everywhere. Could he realize God's presence, and at the same time insult Him to His face by deliberately setting at defiance His law? No; his faith if it be living will fill him with reverence for the just and all-seeing God. Faith draws a picture of the yawning abyss of hell. Will any man who truly believes in hell be likely to walk into it in cold blood? Faith describes heaven to him, prepared by God, and promised to those who love Him. Is it conceivable that any one could have real belief in heaven and yet never move a little finger to deserve it? Would he not on the contrary do and suffer anything to reach this promised land? When in distant parts of the world gold and diamond mines were discovered, and the news of them spread from place to place, in a

very short time thousands and thousands of people poured into these countries in order to share in such a rich harvest. When faith is living and real to us, it brings forth great results. It is like a grain of seed which growing into a tender plant throws out shoots in all directions, producing stem and branches, boughs and leaves, buds, blossom and fruit. "The just man liveth by faith" (*Gal.* iii. 11). But where faith brings forth no results: no fear of God, no repentance, no hope, no desire for better things, then it is dead, and is a husk without grain, and a hindrance to eternal salvation. "Faith without works is dead" (*James* ii. 20). St. Thomas Aquinas says that hell was made for two kinds of men—for those who will not believe, and for those who while believing live as if they had no belief.

II

If the first fruit of faith is that we live in accordance with our faith, the second is that we confess it. Everything that is inwardly real to us seeks to find some external expression. A powerful light sheds its rays to a great distance, like the sun. A burning fire not only heats the stove and the oven; it warms the whole house. Joy and sorrow are not confined to the recesses of the heart; they show themselves in the face, the eyes, the gait, and even in the tone of voice. Intense and burning anger displays itself by the vehemence and rapidity of our utterance. Shall faith, then, if it is inwardly strong and living to us, have no outlet? There is no doubt that if it be alive it will display itself by the profession of

our beliefs, by prayer, by taking part in the services of the Church, by going to the sacraments, and at the very least by the refusal ever to conceal, disguise, or deny our religion. What can induce a Christian man to deny his belief? If it be fear of worldly harm, what can hurt him so much as the denial of his faith? "He that shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven" (*Matt.* x. 33). Or if the desire of worldly profit or advantage weighs with him, what benefit can the world offer so great as that which the open profession of our faith brings us: "Every one, therefore, that shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven" (*Matt.* x. 32). Again, are we influenced by dread of the contempt and scorn which some people deal out to those who believe? Surely it is no degradation to confess the truths revealed by God and taught by the apostles, for which the martyrs shed their blood, and which for so many hundreds of years have been believed, expounded, defended, and confessed by such numbers of holy people. Those who ought to feel ashamed and degraded are those creatures of God who think in their hearts that man is nothing more than an animal without soul and without purpose; that there is no God, no heaven, no hell or eternity, no tie of wedlock, no rights of ownership, no authority. But, instead of being ashamed, they confess their principles by word and deed unblushingly, while we stand by confused at acknowledging the holy teachings of our religion, on which our own well-being and that of the whole structure of human society rests. "I am not ashamed

of the Gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth'' (*Rom.* i. 16).

We possess in the sign of the cross a very special way of confessing our faith; it is easily made, any child can make it; it takes but a moment, but it is full of meaning. What do we say when we make the sign of the cross? ''In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost,'' or also, ''Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost.'' These words constitute an open acknowledgment of the first and greatest mystery of the Christian belief, the mystery of the blessed Trinity.

As we say the words we make upon ourselves the form of the cross to show that we believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross—that He died for us, and by His death gave us life—that He is the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, the creator and judge of all mankind—we confess in fact the mystery of our redemption. In baptism the priest makes the sign of the cross not only on the forehead of the person about to be baptized, to signify that he must never be ashamed of his belief in Our Lord crucified, but also on the shoulders to express that he will fight in the armor of the cross, and on the breast to indicate the love we ought to have for the sufferings of the Cross. Further, as the use of the sign of the cross has been entirely given up by heretics, it is to be looked upon as a confession, not only of Christianity, but of the Catholic faith.

Let us accustom ourselves to make it very often and especially on particular occasions, as, for instance:

(1) On rising in the morning, in order to range ourselves under the banner of Christ. It is the shortest way of forming our intention for the day.

(2) Before going to sleep. The savage beasts when night comes on look for some hedge or bush behind which to shelter. So we, before we drift into the unconsciousness of sleep and dreams, ought to take refuge under the tree of the cross.

(3) Before and after prayer. All that we ask of God and all that He grants us comes to us through the merits of the cross. For this reason we should make the sign of the cross before and after prayer as an act of humility and confidence in God.

(4) Before all important actions, from the same motive as before prayer. Again, in all temptations and dangers, for temptations come from the evil spirit, and even if not from him directly they are at all events kept alive and encouraged by him. The devil is always close at hand, and the sign of the cross is a powerful weapon against him. He has reason to know the cross. It is the symbol of his greatest encounter and of his heavy and shameful defeat, and the token of Christ's victory and triumph. For this reason no evil spirit can endure the sign of the cross. They hate it and fly at the sight of it; they yield and tremble before it. By this sign the saints have conquered temptation and driven out evil. Let us, also, in our hour of struggle make this holy sign with devotion and hide ourselves in the wounds of the Saviour.

By this sign, O Lord, we will live; by it we will

fight and conquer. With the crucifix in our dying hands, and confiding in the virtue and merits of Thy sufferings and death, we will pass before Thy judgment seat to obtain from Thee life everlasting. Amen.

## SERMON VIII

### The Essence of God

*"God is a spirit"* (*John* iv. 24).

WE HAVE already considered what faith is, and what truths we must believe, also the necessity of faith, what should be its characteristics, and how we are bound to confess it by our lives. We will now go on to contemplate the other various truths of religion, and will take them in the order of the Apostles' Creed. It is called the Apostles' Creed because it dates from the time of the apostles and is supposed to have been composed by them, and it is divided into twelve parts or articles.

The first article of the Creed is: "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth."

The very first words, "I believe in God," call for long and careful consideration. The catechism asks, "What is God?" and the answer is, "God is a spirit, infinitely perfect." With the help of the Holy Ghost we will try to explain this definition.

I

The statement that God is a spirit is comprehensible only to those who know what the nature of a spirit is. We recognize a stone because it is hard and heavy and by its color; a tree by its roots, branches, blossom, and fruit; a man by his face,

speech, and gait. But how can we know a spirit? Now, the first thing to be said of a spirit is, that it is not a body. A body is composed of various material and therefore visible parts which can be cut and torn asunder, beaten, and disconnected from one another; therefore, a body is destructible. So, if a spirit is the opposite of a body, then it does not consist of material parts, is invisible, indestructible, and therefore immortal.

But this takes us a very short way. When I state that light is not darkness I have only conveyed what light is not, and not in the least what it is. So, to define a spirit by saying that it is not a body is not enough; I must also try to describe in what it actually consists. A spirit is a being endowed with understanding and free will —any being which is not capable of thought and is not possessed of free will, so that it has not the power of determining its own operations and actions, is not a spirit. Understanding and free will are the essential attributes proper to a spirit.

God is a spirit; who can doubt it? The mere mention of God's name brings to our minds a being whose understanding and intelligence pervade all things, and according to whose decrees the universe is ruled. Moreover, our Saviour said solemnly to the Samaritan woman, "God is a spirit."

The fact that the Holy Scripture speaks at times of the eyes, ears, or hands of God, as the case may be, need be no reason for our feeling perplexed and troubled in our conception of God. Holy Scripture is addressed to human beings, and uses the phrases and imagery current in human lan-

guage. In order to give us an idea of the omniscience of God, for instance, it speaks of God's eye seeing all things; or, to bring home to us His almighty power, it says that God's hands made everything, and so on in the same way. It is hard for us, in fact, to understand how God can see without eyes, hear without ears, and work without hands.

II

Now, God is not only a spirit; He is the supreme spirit. Our soul is a spirit and the angels are also spirits. If we look up at the highest choirs, to the cherubim and seraphim, what power of understanding, what freedom of will we find! By their own choice they elected to resist the leader of revolt, and to serve God eternally. They were free to ally themselves with Lucifer, who rebelled against his Lord and Creator, and headed the first revolt against His throne. They not only possess free will and understanding, but they possess it in a very high degree; they are spirits of a very perfect order, who apprehend many sublime things, and apprehend them correctly, and who by the free choice of their will adhere to the highest good. But God is not only a spirit and a perfect spirit; He is the supreme spirit, that is, perfect in an infinite degree. What does this mean? Oh! if only it were possible to convey it clearly and plainly to you, but the most we can do is to try through the medium of illustrations and comparisons to make it seem a little more real. A wax light is bright, gas is brighter, electric light is the brightest of all. But place any one of them

near the sun—what a fulness of illumination we get there! All earthly radiance becomes as nothing compared with it. But even the rays of the sun have their limit; there are distances which they can not penetrate. Let us picture to ourselves, if we can, a body a thousand times larger and streaming with light a thousand times brighter than that of the sun. We can imagine it growing hour by hour larger and more luminous, and this increase continuing for a thousand years. What a wonderful substance! How large, how transparent, how radiant! But could we even then say in the proper sense of the word that it is infinite? No. Its size has its limit, and its brightness equally so. But God is infinitely perfect, infinite from every point of view. There are some perfections which we are familiar with, others of which we have no experience at all; some that we can imagine, others of which we can form no idea —but all are present in God to an infinite degree.

God's perfections do not exist in Him as separate things, which though joined and united together are yet divisible. In a rose one point of beauty is the color, and another the perfume. Color and perfume are united in the same flower, but the color is not the perfume nor the perfume the color. But in God all perfections merge and become fundamentally one and the same.

God being infinitely perfect, it follows that He is inconceivable and incomprehensible. No measure of space is vast enough to enclose Him, no period of time is long enough to mark the length of His days, no created intellect is clear or keen or subtle enough to understand His nature, no

heart is great enough to love Him as His infinite perfections deserve. No words, no name, no mode of speech can express the infinitely perfect being we call God.

On account of His infinite perfection it follows that our reverence toward God can never be too great, never great enough: "Now to the King of ages immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen" (1 *Tim.* i. 17). What is any one of us compared to the number of people gathered here together? Insignificant. One more or less is scarcely noticeable. And what are your numbers in comparison with all the creatures who have lived and who are living, and have yet to live on this earth? As nothing. And what is all mankind, all the angels, all the stars of the heavens, in comparison with God? Nothing. What an immeasurable, incomprehensible distance! Now, compare yourself to God: "What is man, O Lord, that Thou art mindful of him, or the Son of Man that Thou dost visit him" (*Ps.* viii. 5). "O Lord, there is none like Thee and there is no other God beside Thee of all whom we have heard of with our ears" (1 *Paral.* xvii. 20).

III

"God is a spirit infinitely perfect," the Lord of heaven and earth from whom all good flows. If God is the supreme eternal and infinitely perfect spirit, it is self evident that all good things without exception come from Him and that He is sovereign Lord of everything that exists. "All things are mine," He says of Himself. Angels

and men, heaven and earth, land and sea! What a kingdom but belonging to how great a king! "Of Him, by Him, and in Him are all things" (*Rom.* xi. 36) says St. Paul and we venture to add all things are for Him.

"All things of Him"—a king who was the creator of His own kingdom. "All things by Him"—everything in His kingdom works according to the plans of His wisdom. "All things in Him"—God is in the world, or better still the world is in God. The King is so great that the confines of His kingdom can not enclose him. "All things for him." As the King lives for His people and for His kingdom, so the whole world and all that it contains can serve no other end or aim, but the glory of their sovereign.

If God is king and lord of the whole world, how honorable and great and essential a thing to be in His service. Better to serve Him than to be master of the whole world—"To serve God is to rule." We owe Him not only our best service, but as our highest good, our deepest love is due to Him. On whom could we more worthily bestow our hearts than on Him who is infinitely perfect. "What have I in heaven, and besides Thee what do I desire upon earth? . . . Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever" (*Ps.* lxxii. 25, 26).

## SERMON IX

### The Eternity and the Unchangeableness of God

*"For I am the Lord and I change not"* (*Mal.* iii. 6).

We saw in our last instruction that God is infinite in all His perfections, and that therefore He possesses all perfections to an infinite degree. This being so, it follows that it is not possible to grasp entirely or explain all God's attributes. We can only single out a few, and we have selected for closer contemplation those which appear to be set forth most fully in God's revelations and which seem to have a special bearing upon our own lives.

To-day we will consider with the help of the Holy Ghost:

I. The eternity of God.
II. The unchangeableness of God.

I

What do we mean when we say that God is eternal? We mean that "God had no beginning; He always was, and He always will be." God had no beginning! There has been a steeple belonging to this church for four hundred years, yet there was a time when no stone of it existed, and no one had ever even thought of building it. One can say the same of every work wrought by the hands of man. We can take our minds back to when there was not a single house in this town, when there were no towns at all such as we now

know, no nations such as exist to-day, when no human being breathed on this earth. There is nothing to prevent our going back further still to a time before the terrestrial globe itself was formed, when there were neither sun nor moon nor stars nor heavens, when the angels had not been created, when nothing existed except God alone. But we can not go back to a point when there was no God. "God had no beginning, He always was and He always will be." He is from eternity to eternity—"The ancient of days" (*Dan.* vii. 9).

Not only had God no beginning, He will have no end. "As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be world without end. Amen." We see with our own eyes how all earthly things grow old and fall into decay, and finally go to ruin; the strongest building crumbles to dust, the most powerful kingdoms are submerged. But of God it is said: "Thy years shall not fail" (*Ps.* ci. 28). If we give free rein to our thoughts, and let them fly on through the countless centuries yet to come before the end of the world—when all men will be dead, the sun burned out, and the stars fallen from the heavens—such a time will in the end of all things be reached; and if we think on further and ever further still, through as many years as there are leaves on the trees, or drops of water in the ocean, surely we must reach the end when God will cease to exist. But no: "From eternity to eternity Thou art God" (*Ps.* lxxxix. 2).

The eternity of God should not strike us as being less wonderful because our own souls and all

spirits created by God are immortal. There is a threefold difference between the eternity of God and the immortality of our souls: (1) The life of the soul has no end, but it had a beginning. God had no beginning and will have no end. (2) God will have no end, because of His essence He can never end. Our soul and all other spirits are immortal only because God does not choose to destroy them. (3) Our existence is dependent on God's support for its continuance and preservation; but God exists of Himself, and His eternity is an essential attribute of His nature: "Who only hath immortality" (1 *Tim.* vi. 16) in the full meaning of the word.

This takes us to the very heart of the matter. The eternity of God does not in its essence consist of His being without beginning and without end, but in something quite different. The Bible says: "He is ever." What does that mean? I will try to explain. Our life and the life of all creatures is made up of divisions, minute portions of time, moments which follow closely one upon the other. There are past, present, and future moments. The present lasts but an instant, and it is always a different one, like the medicine of a sick person which is measured out in drops. But the life of God is not made up of successive parts or divisions or minutes; His duration is a permanent state. Everything is present in Him. His life is neither opening before Him, nor passing away, nor is it in any sense divisible. He is from eternity to eternity. The Psalmist says of Him: "For a thousand years in Thy sight are as yesterday which is past" (*Ps.* lxxxix. 4).

Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. To the King of eternities, to the immortal and invisible God alone, be glory from eternity to eternity. Because He is eternal, may He be eternally praised.

II

The second of God's attributes which we desire to contemplate is His unchangeableness. What is the meaning of "unchangeable"? It means unchanging. It means that God remains eternally the same without ever changing in any of his counsels. Everything in this world is subject to change. The earth alters from day to day, rotating sometimes nearer and sometimes further from the sun. Interiorly and exteriorly it bears traces of the constant mighty upheaval and revolutions to which it is subject by fire, water, earthquakes, storms, heat, and cold. Whatever is on the earth is in a state of change. Trees grow up and die, flowers bloom and fade, sunshine alternates with rain, heat with cold. One season follows another, nations ring the changes on war and peace, friendship and enmity; treaties are signed and revoked. And we ourselves—do we not alter? Not only our garments, but our very body changes. It was small and it becomes big, young and it grows old, healthy and it falls sick. The soul, too, becomes transformed. A man learns and understands and assimilates what at another time he did not know or dream of. Memory in old age dwindles and diminishes till it returns nearly to the blankness of infancy. The will vacillates between good and

evil, virtue and vice; the mind turns from joy to sorrow. The entire man exchanges life for death, and who knows whence he came or whither he is tending?

But these changes are not in God; He is unchangeable. We learn this from His own lips: "For I am the Lord and I change not" (*Mal.* iii. 6). So little does God change that St. James says: "With God there is no shadow of alteration" (*James* i. 17)—absolutely no change! Apart from the frequent emphasis laid by Holy Scripture on the immutability of God, reason would indicate it to us. All change must be either for the better or the worse; by it, be it where and what it may, some quality is either acquired or lost; but if God could add to His attributes, or if they could be lessened or diminished, then He could not be infinitely perfect. His perfections can neither be taken from nor added to. All that He is, all that He thinks, all that He decrees, has been from all eternity.

But, you will say, we read in the Bible that God repented having created mankind, and of His being unchangeable. Nevertheless, that He is so giving them; and you will wonder how all this tallies with what you have just heard about His being unchangeable. Nevertheless, that He is so, still remains a fact. It is we that change, not God; and as we alter our attitude toward Him He appears to undergo a change toward us, from our different point of view. Look into a clear unsullied mirror, with a clean or a dirty face, and you will see each time a very different picture, yet the change will not be in the mirror itself, but

in what you ask it to reflect. Again as you stand before it some one comes and places himself beside you, standing first on your left and then on your right; as he shifts his position, so is the reflection in the mirror different. You have not changed, but the person standing by you has moved. In the same way it is not God our Lord who alters; it is we the creatures, and so God's attitude in relation to us does not remain always the same.

God's unchangeableness and His eternity contain a great lesson for us all. What do we all prefer? A lasting or a passing benefit? Which is most to be prized and sought for? Surely that which is lasting. If we order a pair of shoes or a new dress we are particular to ensure that they shall wear well. Of earthly desires, amongst the strongest is the wish for continued good health, long life, and lasting happiness. But what is the most permanent of all goods? No other but God, the eternal and unchangeable. To love Him, to seek Him, to serve Him, to put Him before all earthly things, this is genuine wisdom, and we are fools if we let our hearts cling to this earth and love anything in this world more than the eternal God. Can any man who believes in God be so mistaken? Can he not see that everything earthly bears engraved on it by the hand of God the mark of change? Look at the fading leaves, look at the furrows of an old man's face, look at death, monuments, tombstones. All, all things are passing away. Fools are they who love any one more than God; but wise, thrice wise, is he who with all the strength of his heart, and with every

fiber of his being, clings to God and loves Him above all things. "This world passes away and the desire thereof, but he that doth the will of God abideth for ever" (1 *John* ii. 17).

## SERMON X

### The Omnipresence of God

*"Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and of His greatness there is no end"* (*Ps.* cxliv. 3).

WE WILL continue to make the different perfections of Almighty God the subject of our instructions, and to-day, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we will consider the omnipresence of God. When we say that God is omnipresent, what do we mean? We mean that God is present everywhere in all places.

A man can be bodily present only in one single place at once. While I am speaking to you from the pulpit I can not at the same time be in my own house reading or writing; and had I remained at home I could not be here speaking to you. I can only be present in one place, and what applies to me in this respect applies equally to all of you, and to all created spirits. Should any created being be seen in several places at the same time, it would be a wonderful phenomenon. We hear such things of the saints; we are told of a miracle of this kind in the life of St. Francis Xavier, for example. It is vouched for by faith, that the sacred body of our Saviour, while sitting at the right hand of the Father, is also present under the appearance of bread and wine on the countless altars where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved. The Body of Christ, or rather His Sacred Humanity, is therefore present in numberless places si-

multaneously, but God the Father is omnipresent, which means present everywhere in all places in heaven and on earth. This we learn from God Himself, who says by the mouth of the prophet Jeremias: "Do I not fill heaven and earth?" (*Jer.* xxiii. 24). Holy Job and the Royal Prophet vie with each other in describing and praising in sublime language the omnipresence of God. In the Book of Job it is said: "He is higher than heaven, and deeper than hell; the measure of Him is longer than the earth and broader than the sea" (*Job* xi. 8). David describes a soul flying from the face of God and yet meeting Him everywhere. "If I ascend into heaven Thou art there, if I descend into hell Thou art present; if I take my wings early in the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there also shall Thy hand lead me, Thy right hand shall hold me" (*Ps.* cxxxviii. 8-10). "Great is the Lord and of His greatness there is no end" (*Ps.* cxliv. 3). If we scrutinize carefully and compare all these texts of Holy Scripture they can not fail to bring home to us the fact that God is everywhere, in all places, in heaven and in hell. He is omnipresent, for His greatness is without limit.

The omnipresence of God helps us to realize our own restrictions as creatures in comparison with God. Our soul is contained in a body which occupies in life no more than a few feet, and when we are dead is measured by a coffin. It costs us toil and trouble to get from place to place, and in order to reach one spot we must forsake another; if we remain always stationary we see nothing of other places, but if on the other hand we choose

to wander about we can not remain long anywhere. How paltry and miserable does this state of things seem in view of the omnipresence of God, Who is present in all countries and towns, in every street and house, in all heights and depths, mountains and valleys, with the stars and the vast expanse of the heavens—simultaneously, really, and truly present. We know of numbers of constellations and have some idea of the immense space that separates them from us. There are some among them so far off that an express train would not reach them after traveling unintermittently for a thousand years. And yet God's presence in these distant constellations is just as real as it is here in our own planet. God is everywhere: "Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised, and of His greatness there is no end" (*Ps.* cxliv. 3).

When we say that God is everywhere we must be careful not to understand this in a wrong way. The globe on which we live is large; but if we picture it to ourselves growing larger and larger so as to reach the moon, the sun, and as far as the farthest star, and to fill up all created space, then we could in a certain sense say that the earth is everywhere. But is it in this sense that we say God is everywhere? Not at all. What is the difference? The earth is a substance and is made up of material parts, and, however vast it is, one part of it must be on the top, another underneath, one in the interior, another on the surface, and where one part is another can not be, nor can the whole be where each part is. That this is so must be plain to every one. But when we say

God is everywhere, we mean something quite different. God is not made up of parts, much less of material parts. Where He is present He is entirely present; therefore He is entirely in heaven, on earth, and in every place, entirely within and without us, entirely in the world and in every part of it, entirely in the soul and in all spirits and in the body. His entire being is everywhere, with all His perfections, His power and wisdom. Oh, how small and narrow do we seem when we consider the omnipresence of God!

When we say that God is present everywhere in the whole world we have not exhausted the subject. God is present everywhere, but is not in any way bounded or hemmed in, like water in a bucket, or as a lake enclosed by its own banks. The world and the whole space of the universe, large as they are, have a limit. But God is sublime and has no limit; He is everywhere, and even if the world were a thousand times larger than it now is God would be present everywhere upon it. It is true God is in the world, but it is much more true that the world is in God; He is in it, over it, outside it. The world does not contain God, God contains the world. "Heaven of heavens can not contain Thee" (3 *Kings* viii. 27). God is omnipresent.

It is impossible to exaggerate the influence which the thought of the universal presence of God should have upon our lives. It is a light to illumine the darkest places of our earthly pilgrimage and give us courage and hope (*Ps.* xv. 8, 24, 15). It should be also a powerful rein holding us back from sin. In a class of big boys if

the teacher is called away, what a hubbub takes place! What chatter and noise, what restless movement and shuffling of feet! But the teacher suddenly appears and in a twinkling his presence alters everything. So should it be with us when we think of the presence of God. Though our senses be in rebellion, our passions on fire, and hell itself let loose, one thought of the holy presence of God will bring everything under control. So thought Susannah, who, when sorely tempted, cried: "It is better for me to fall into your hands without doing it (the wicked action), than to sin in the sight of the Lord." The thought of the presence of God is a continual spur urging us on to higher things. The servant works more diligently when his master overlooks him, the soldier fights more bravely under the eye of his general; we, too, will labor more earnestly, pray more devoutly, suffer more patiently, if we never forget that God is present, that He looks on at all that we do, not as one blind, but in the plenitude of His omniscience, His holiness and justice—God, who counts the drops of our sweat, who knows our sorrows, who hears our sighs, who overlooks and forgets nothing, and who rewards us a hundredfold with eternal life. Amen.

## SERMON XI

### The Omniscience of God

*"Oh, the depths of the riches and of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God!"* (*Rom.* xi. 33).

CLOSELY connected with God's omnipresence, which was the subject of our last discourse, is His omniscience. God is everywhere; it follows, therefore, that He knows everything. What, then, do we mean when we say that God is omniscient? We mean that He knows and sees all things, even our most secret thoughts, words, and actions. In our instruction to-day we will, with the help of the Holy Spirit, take this answer and consider it point by point. God knows all things! How much or rather how little do *we* know. It requires years of study to enable us to master even the very elements of knowledge. We have books in plenty to teach us many things, but find me the man who has read them all, or who, having read them, understands and retains them. It is stated somewhere that St. Jerome had perused every book in existence in his own time. He may have done so, but I do not think the same can be said of any one nowadays; but even if a man could be found who had read and digested every book written, he would still, compared to an angel, be as an ignorant child. And what proportion could there be between his learning and the knowledge of God. It is no more than ignorance, foolishness, idiocy—for, how great is the extent of God's

knowledge? God knows all things. Holy Scripture says: "Of His wisdom there is no number" (*Ps.* cxlvi. 5). "All things are naked and open to His eye" (*Heb.* iv. 13). "The eyes of the Lord are far brighter than the sun" (*Ecclus.* xxiii. 28). He is omniscient; consider what that represents!

If He knows everything it follows that He knows the past. When we try to examine our conscience before confession, we often have great trouble in recalling to mind the things that we have said and done and thought during a period of a few months, or even weeks. But it is all present to the mind of God, and He knows not only what was done here and there, yesterday, or the day before, but everything that every creature, at the farthest end of the earth, and in every corner of the globe has said, done, thought, or experienced. He knows and understands the sequence of the various occasions, causes, motives, and circumstances of everything that has ever taken place in heaven and on earth. "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God!" (*Rom.* ii. 3.) So deep are they that they stretch down into the very root of things and into the most remote recesses of the past.

He knows also the present. Consider what that means. If we look at a drop of water through a magnifying glass thousands of living atoms become visible, attacking each other, fighting, conquering, killing, and destroying one another, and each has its own origin, constitution, and parts. Consider one single leaf that falls from the tree —the thousands of tiny veins and arteries of

which it is composed, every one with its own beginning and end, made of different material, and standing in a specified relation to other things, and with a particular purpose. What numbers of fish in the sea, how many leaves in the forest, and yet everything connected with them, their size, number, relation to each other, formation, and purpose is known to God! The same must be said of every living creature, of every drop of blood, every vein, nerve, bone, and muscle of our bodies; of every worm crawling upon the ground, of every star shining in the heaven, of every hair of our heads. The Scripture tells us, "He has counted the hairs of our head," "He has measured our every step," "He has numbered the stars and called them by their name." Oh, the depth of the riches and of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God, which penetrates everything great and small to its innermost being!

God knows the future. Our outlook over the future is not far-reaching and is very misleading. We can hardly tell what the weather to-morrow will be; we can not be sure even of how we ourselves will act from day to day. Peter in the evening said to our Saviour: "Even if I should die with Thee I will not deny Thee. I will go with Thee to prison and to death." How little he knew what was coming; the very reverse happened, and the omniscient Son of God foretold it: "The cock shall not crow this day till thou thrice deniest that thou knowest Me" (*Luke* xxii. 34). And so it actually came to pass. God knows not only what we are doing now, but what we shall do to-morrow, throughout the year, and in the fu-

ture; how long we have to live, when, where, and how we shall die, and if we shall be eternally happy. He foresees not only in our case, but in that of all men and creatures, their duration, their deeds and sufferings, the good and bad in them, their end, and everything concerning them. It is all as clearly before Him as if it were this moment actually happening. Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom of God which reaches into the most distant future!

It is not enough to say that God knows everything past, present, and to come. God could, out of His infinite power, create thousands of creatures more than already exist. He has conceived in His mind all those things which He might have, but has not, created, and knows what they would do if He had created them. Another thing is also true; we, ourselves, would possibly think, speak, and act quite differently if we had lived at another time, or in another place, amongst different people, with more or less grace; in a word, if we had lived under different conditions. Such conditions may be multiplied simply countless times for each creature. Only God can know, not only what each one has done or will do, but also what they would have done under different circumstances and in different surroundings. In a word, He knows all things, what is actual and what is possible, the things of time and those of eternity, and He knows also Himself the Creator. "The spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God" (1 *Cor.* ii. 10).

What God knows, He knows perfectly and from all eternity. What we learn, we derive from the

exterior, from the lips of our teachers, or from what we read in books, or by observing what we see around us. We learn it slowly and laboriously. God's knowledge is not derived from anything outside of Himself. He knows all things of Himself, because they were planned by His wisdom and brought about by His infinite power. What we have taken pains to learn we must take trouble to remember, and it easily fades from our memory. To God it is impossible to forget. He knows everything from the beginning and remembers it from all eternity. The little that our mind is capable of retaining we can not use all at once, but only piecemeal, in bits, one item after the other —our knowledge is patchwork, and is made up of scraps. While you are listening to me attentively you can not also be thinking of your household duties, and any one who is now turning over in his mind any worldly concerns or business is not in a position to take in what I am saying. Our minds can not harbor two different thoughts at the same instant. Almighty God grasps, if one can so express it, all things in one single thought. It is not that He remembers, or does not forget, or learns, but that everything is constantly present to His mind. Oh, the unfathomable wisdom of God, which embraces all things and retains them from eternity to eternity! God knows our most secret thoughts, and all that in the innermost recesses of our hearts we desire and long for. He is the "searcher of the hearts and the reins."

The realization of God's omniscience must excite in us the need of turning to Him, and humbling ourselves deeply before Him, the om-

niscient God, to whom all things relating to ourselves are known, our past, our weaknesses, our sins, our future; for what are we in His sight but ignorant creatures to whom the past is blurred, the future a blank, and who do not even understand the movements of their own hearts, or whether they be worthy of God's love, or of His hate.

Oh, omniscient God, we humble ourselves before Thee and promise never to outrage Thee by trying to appear other than we are. No one can deceive Thee, and before Thy sacred tribunal in the sacrament of Penance we will accuse ourselves as we are, and as Thy eye sees us to be.

The thought of Thy omniscience will be our comfort, for when the path of our life becomes so complex and entangled that we can see no way through it, when the future looks so dark, so frightening, so oppressive as almost to overwhelm us, we will not let despair take hold of us, but like simple children will place our hand in that of the all-wise Father: "Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me" (*Ps.* xxii. 4). The thought of Thy wisdom will console us for the want of insight of men. It may be that our strivings are not recognized, our virtues not appreciated; our pains and sufferings may be viewed with indifferent eyes, our struggles held as nothing. But Thou knowest, O my God, how it is with us. Thou hast counted our tears, and measured our work, and seen our battles; nothing escapes Thee, and nothing, not even what is unknown to men in this life will be without its reward. Thy infinite

knowledge will console us for our own shortcomings and deficiencies. So much in this world, that is known to others, remains hidden to us. Time, opportunity, means, capability, are all in part wanting to us to understand things which many people have fully mastered. Let us take comfort. The day will dawn when we shall see Thee, when Thou wilt be our teacher, when in the full joy of eternal life we shall read clearly in Thy countenance all that our heart longs to know. Thy secrets will be our secrets in the life to come which Thou wilt give us. Amen.

## SERMON XII

### The Wisdom of God

*"Thou hast made all things in wisdom"* (*Ps.* ciii. 24).

It is fitting that we should follow up our discourse on the omniscience of God by the consideration of His wisdom, for, although God's wisdom and His omniscience are not by any means the same thing, still they are so closely connected as to be sometimes mistaken one for the other. We therefore propose to ask three questions concerning the wisdom of God, to which with the help of the Holy Spirit we will endeavor to reply, namely:

I. What is wisdom?
II. How does the divine wisdom show itself?
III. In what way can we imitate it? Or, in other words, our instruction will deal with the nature, indications, and imitation of the divine wisdom.

I

What do we mean when we speak of the wisdom of God? We mean that God knows how to order all things so that they shall fulfill His eternal designs. From this answer we can already see the difference that must exist between omniscience and wisdom. God in His omniscience knows everything, but in His wisdom He orders all for the best, namely, for the realizing of His own eternal ends. Wisdom is concerned with decisions, made with a definite object in order to reach a partic-

ular end. Without end or purpose there is no wisdom. Wisdom stands in the same relation to intelligence that intelligence does to smartness, and all are directed to attaining a given end. We call a man smart when right or wrong, through thick and thin, he goes straight to his point. A man is intelligent who, having a good and honorable object in view, knows how to reach it by the use of right and proper means. But when do we consider a man to be wise? When he has before him a high and sacred end which he attains by the best and noblest methods. Think of a father of a family with a numerous progeny who makes it his object to become rich, and who succeeds by means of fraud, cunning, and deceit in amassing a large capital. A smart man we should call him. A second father sets before himself the same purpose, but he by means of hard work, self-denial, and economy builds up his fortune. A capable man. Now, we can think of yet a third class of man; one who makes his object the eternal happiness of his children rather than their temporal welfare, and who in joy or in sorrow, in happiness or misfortune, riches or poverty, strives in season and out of season, by word and example to bring them up in the fear of God for eternal life. And he succeeds. He is not only a clever man, he is a wise one; so you see in order to be wise three things are necessary: A noble end, the attainment of it, and the employment for this purpose of worthy means. God's wisdom therefore lies in this, that He makes use of the best and surest means to reach the sublime ends which He infallibly attains.

II

If wisdom, then, necessarily consists in what we have advanced, it is easy to prove and demonstrate that God our Lord is infinitely wise.

(a) His perfection furnishes proof of it, for an infinitely perfect God can in all His works, ends, and designs be actuated only by the best, holiest, and most sublime motives and intentions—the glory of His name and the good of His creatures —there can be no higher or holier purpose. Moreover, God by His omniscience can discern all the means and ways which will accomplish His will. He knows all creatures and can discriminate whether and how far they are qualified to assist in working out His designs, and in what way they can best be utilized. He has at His disposal His own omnipotence, and He is complete master of His own creatures. He can call out of nothing what is necessary to Him, and even the obstacles in His path, the sins of man, He can cause to work together for good. His ends are the holiest, and all means are at His command; so how can there be a shadow of a doubt that all things are entering into His eternal plans?

(b) Scripture gives us further evidence of this by its frequent references to the wisdom of God. It is said in the Psalms: "Thou hast made all things in wisdom" (*Ps.* ciii. 24), and the Book of Wisdom, speaking in sublime language, says: "She reacheth therefore from end to end mightily and ordereth all things sweetly" (*Wis.* viii. 1). Yes, from the smallest to the greatest, from the first to the last of His creatures, from the least

part to the entire universe, from the beginning to the end of the world, the wisdom of God governs all things and guides them to the fulfillment of His will.

(c) We can draw endless proofs of God's wisdom from the actual ordering of His creation. We will sketch at least in outline a few of its principal features. Let us consider, for example, this earthly globe, suspended in space, far enough from the sun to escape being burned up, and sufficiently near to derive from it warmth and light; so poised upon its axis in its revolution round the sun as to give rise to the different seasons of the year. And then the constitution of the earth itself made up as it is of land and water. Without water we should have neither clouds to produce rain, nor rain to foster the growth of vegetation, nor vegetation to use for our food. Then, while leaving out thousands of other things, we may pass on to God's creature man, the monarch of the earth. What a marvel is the eye! Large enough to embrace distance with one glance, set fast amid its bulwarks of bone, like a city protected by ramparts, provided with lids to shut and open. Truly the eye is formed for light and light for the eye. Consider the mouth, the tongue! What a multitude of sounds, how many syllables, words, and sentences this simple organ is capable of producing, from the first cry of an infant to the notes of the most melodious singer, the tones of the most finished orator. Look at the hand; it can catch, grasp, hold, draw, strike, thrust, wrench, press. It has been said by a pagan that the hand is the instrument of all instruments, for what would any

implement be worth without it? We could count over in this way all the members and parts of our body. Think of the properties of the atmosphere which surround the whole earth! Without air no living creature could live for five minutes. What an abundance of it is made for us, how easily it penetrates everywhere, with what facility do we breathe it in and out!

God's wisdom is evident in all His creation, its constitution, its preservation, its disposition; in the workings of nature as well as the workings of grace. Contemplate the redemption. By it the Son of God became man and suffered and died for us. True man, else He could not have suffered, nor would His sufferings have had any meaning for us; but true God, also, which gave unending merit to all He endured. True God, yet He willingly did what was necessary and more than was necessary to satisfy the divine justice; true man, He showed us the value of mercy and love. Wisdom permeates everything from beginning to end. It runs through the lives of individuals, as well as that of nations. Study the history of the people of Israel, or that of the Church of Christ which the eternal wisdom has guided through a sea of blood to victory and stability, and which at the last day will appear in all her splendor. Then God will disclose His plans to us, and we shall understand how all things have been made and regulated by Him for the best, for the working out of His designs. It behooves us to imitate the divine wisdom. How can we do this? By setting before ourselves a worthy end in life, toward which to direct all our efforts and labors. If we

test ourselves on this point, it will easily be made clear to us, whether we deserve to rank among fools, or whether we may count ourselves as wise.

What is your ambition? The answer of thousands and thousands would be: To pass our lives as happily and comfortably as possible. Away with you among the fools! Others reply: we want to acquire riches for ourselves, that our old age may be free from care, and that there may be enough to provide for our children and if possible for our children's children. Fools, join the ranks of the fools! Death follows in the train of worldly wisdom.

And you, to what do you aspire? We desire to make a name that will live after us, and that will be remembered from generation to generation. But how, let me ask, do you intend to accomplish that, and when you have done so what will it profit you? Fools as you are, you must take your place with the rest.

And we, what do we long for? You will reply, I hope, we are not to be classed with all the foolish men, our ideal in life is higher and holier; we want to travel as pilgrims through this world to our heavenly home. That is wise, but recollect that wisdom consists in *using the right means* to reach the best end. Your end is the right one, but do you hope to reach it by the path of evil-doing? Madness! Do you hope to avoid sin without shunning the occasions? Madness, madness! Do you imagine you can attain your ideal without grace, without prayer, without the help of God? Folly, folly, threefold folly! Cling to the goal you have chosen—eternal life, for there can be none more

sublime. But seize hold of and employ those means which lead to it: horror of sin, fear of the occasions of it, the practice of prayer, and the most unbroken confidence in the wisdom of the guiding hand of God. Amen.

## SERMON XIII

### The Omnipotence of God

*"Almighty is His name"* (*Ex.* xv. 3).

WE INTEND to-day to follow up our instruction on the wisdom of God by passing on to the consideration of His omnipotence, for in point of fact these two attributes of the Almighty are closely interwoven. The omnipotence of God makes known to us His power; His wisdom directs and guides that power to the accomplishment of the divine intentions and designs. Therefore, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we will contemplate:

I. What God's omnipotence is in itself.
II. What it means for us.

I

Why is God called almighty? "God is called almighty because He can do all things, and nothing is hard or impossible to Him." This answer is so plain that it would seem to require no further explanation; but in order that we may form a clearer conception of the omnipotence of God we will endeavor to-day to bring home to ourselves that it is a power which is in itself (1) entirely independent and (2) absolutely unbounded.

It is entirely independent. This signifies that God derives His power from Himself and from no other. All creatures possess within given great or narrow limits a certain amount of power.

Kings have a wide influence. They regulate war and peace, a sign from them sets armaments in motion, laws are made by a stroke of their pen, thousands hang on their every word. Nevertheless the greatest amongst them have recognized that their power comes not from themselves, but from God; their official style, and even their coinage, often describes them as: "By the grace of God, king or emperor of such a realm," and, even where it is not emphasized, the fact remains that they of themselves are powerless. Look at the authority wielded by the Pope. He draws up laws for the whole Church, he forgives sin, he remits and inflicts punishment. But his strength is not his own; it is derived from the providence of God, who has placed him where he is. God alone is almighty.

God's power is not subordinate to the material with and by which He works. A painter could not give expression to his art without color, nor a sculptor without stone or wood or marble; and what would a writer do without paper or ink? They are all dependent on their materials and are as helpless without them as is a smith without a hammer, or an astronomer without a telescope. But God for His operations requires neither material nor instruments. What He wills comes to pass—"He spoke and they were made" (*Ps.* cxlviii. 5).

God's might is not the result of labor and exertion, so it is not liable to grow weak from fatigue and weariness. The most skilful hand, the strongest arm will tire with prolonged labor; the fleetest foot will slacken with continued traveling; the

tongue wearies with speaking, the eye with seeing, and even the mind wears out under the strain of thought. But the power of God is unwearied. His activity does not depend on effort, and experiences therefore neither relaxation nor exhaustion. The mere exercise of His will suffices.

Further, the power of God is not influenced by time, nor does it depend on the co-operation of His creatures. When we desire to accomplish any undertaking, we require not only room enough to work in, but an allotted space of time, sometimes years and years; also the necessary light, nourishment, relaxation, and health; moreover, we have to look frequently for the support of others, and most of all we must rely on our own state of mind and body; and when in the end we have contrived to provide for all these conditions our success is even then often doubtful. But what does God require? Not time, for He spoke and they were made; not the help of creatures, for what He accomplishes by their means He could bring about equally without them. The power of God, therefore, is almighty by reason of its absolute independence.

Secondly, it is almighty because the range of it is boundless. How far does human strength go? Not very far. The domain of thought is a rich field, wherein the mind of man can conceive all that his heart desires, but the sum and substance of what he has power to realize and actually bring to pass is small and limited in the extreme. But God can do all things—all things not only as they are known to men and angels, but He can do that which surpasses their imagination and is present

only to His own divine mind, all, in fact, which the mind of God is capable of conceiving. "No word shall be impossible with God" (*Luke* i. 37). But there is much which God is incapable of; He can not sin, He can not be irrational, He can do nothing foolish or unreasonable. He is limited by His own infinite perfections, His holiness and wisdom. But He could in a moment create thousands of worlds more, more angels, more stars, more creatures of every kind than we can picture. "Whatsoever the Lord pleased He hath done, in heaven, in earth, in the sea, and in all the deeps" (*Ps.* cxxxiv. 6).

The power of God is something unfathomable, not only because it is unlimited as to the things it can do, but also because it is inexhaustible in itself—an inexhaustible force. Everything created has an appointed measure of strength: the most powerful steam-engine is made to draw a certain weight and not a jot more; the camel may be loaded up to a point, but beyond that it breaks down —we say "it is the last straw that breaks the camel's back"—the one straw too many. If our earth were to come into violent contact with one of the other heavenly bodies, what a tremendous collision would ensue! Yet, the strength of that shock, great as it would be, can be counted and reckoned with; but God's power is infinite. How can we tell this? Because He can create out of nothing. If all the powers mental and physical of man were joined to those of the angels; and all the forces of nature and of all the heavenly bodies were added to them, and if every nerve were strained to find a way, they still could not suc-

ceed in creating out of nothing even a fly, or a blade of straw, or a grain of sand. Oh, how helpless are men, who though they can change and refine, mold and fashion what is already beautiful, can not create out of nothing! God only can do this. Oh, the feebleness of man compared with the power of God! Seventy times in Scripture is He called almighty.

II

What, then, for us is the signification of the almightiness of God, which, being independent of all things, yet extends to everything and is in itself infinite? What practical meaning can we find in it, and to what should the thought of it excite us? Surely it should move us to fix all our hopes in God, and to trust to nothing in this world, not to ourselves or others, nor to the judgment, strength, influence, promises, or capability of any one alive, with the same confidence that we give to God. This is quite consistent; God is stronger than creatures, without Him they can do nothing. We honor God by leaning on Him more than on any creature, more than all creatures put together. If with our whole hearts we trust Him, we shall not falter in our confidence toward Him when people turn from us, or rise up threateningly against us: "In God have I hoped: I will not fear what man can do to me" (*Ps.* lv. 11). So says the Royal Prophet. "If I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me" (*Ps.* xxii. 4). Even when God Himself seems to have forsaken us, we must not cease to hope in Him. "Although He should kill me, I

will trust in Him" (*Job* xiii. 15). So spoke the holy and patient Job, against whom the whole world seemed to be arrayed. His cattle were stolen, his children murdered, his health destroyed; mocked at by his wife, mistrusted by his friends, he sat alone in his misery. But his trust in God was never shaken. "Though He should kill me I will trust in Him." His healing power will save me, if not in this world, then in the next. We should not only rely on God in every physical and spiritual danger; we should give Him a confidence so firm and unshaken that it will bear some proportion to His infinite power, for on what more secure foundation could our confidence rest? God is not only good and merciful, not only omniscient and omnipresent, He is almighty. We have no enemy from whom He can not protect us, no danger out of which He can not rescue us, no sorrow for which He can not console us: "If God be for us, who is against us" (*Rom.* viii. 31). Let us, then, say from our hearts the words of the Psalmist, which we find at the end of the *Te Deum:* "In Thee, O God, have I hoped; let me never be confounded" (*Ps.* xxx. 2). Amen.

## SERMON XIV

### The Holiness of God

*"Be holy, because I am holy"* (*Lev.* xi. 44).

IN OUR instruction last Sunday we made some attempt to realize God's almighty power, and we will now proceed to consider a further perfection of our heavenly Father, namely, His holiness, which is that attribute by which He loves good and detests evil.

In order to make our explanation clear we have divided our discourse into three points and with the help of the Holy Spirit we will contemplate the holiness of God:

I. In His essence.
II. In His laws.
III. In His works.

I

God is holy in His essence? What does that mean? Holiness, like truth, implies a relation. When is my impression of a thing the true one? It is the true one when I represent it to my mind as it actually is. When are the words true with which I relate an occurrence? They are true when they describe the occurrence as it in reality took place. Truth, therefore, is the right relation of the understanding to things. Holiness is also a relation, not of the understanding, but of the will. He is holy whose will loves and desires only that which is good, and who loves the more in

proportion as the good is greater. If we describe a man as holy we mean that he not only wills no evil, but that he practises all virtues and loves God above all things. We represent the blessed in heaven as being united by unalterable love to the highest good. Holiness is, therefore, the relation of the will toward good, the highest good.

But how is God holy in His essence? This has already been indicated; Our Lord God is the supreme and highest good, the infinitely perfect being. "But one is good, God only." Now, God recognizes His own excellence, and as the highest good He loves Himself. This knowledge of Himself is eternal; so, therefore, is the love He bears Himself; and just as His knowledge of Himself will be everlasting so will His love of Himself be; and as He must of necessity know Himself, so does He of necessity love Himself. To love Himself first above all things and of necessity, and everything else for His own sake in agreement with His holy will—in this consists the sanctity of God. From this naturally arise the various qualities of the holiness of God.

The holiness of God is infinite. He loves Himself as He deserves and His love is worthy of the highest good. The holiness of any creature has its limits. Even the holiest among them—the Blessed Virgin Mary—could not love God as He deserves. No light of earth, however powerful, can attain the strength of the sun.

The sanctity of God is a necessary sanctity and is inherent in His nature; He must love Himself. The most abandoned of His creatures may be purified and made holy, and even the angels of

heaven have power to sin and fall away, but God is of necessity holy.

The holiness of God is unalterable, and can neither be increased nor diminished. Holy people on earth climb up step by step, but are also subject to fall back and lose ground; but the holiness of God is inherent in His nature, and is its very essence. As He is infinite wisdom, so is He infinite holiness. He is the highest good, and He it is who loves this highest good. He is at the same time the lover and the beloved. The essence of light is to illumine; so must God perforce love. What can be more at one with God than God Himself? Therefore His holiness is to be exalted and praised in a special way above all His perfections. The four living creatures seen by St. John before the throne of God cried without intermission day and night, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come" (*Apoc.* iv. 8). Three of God's perfections: His holiness, His omnipotence, His eternity, were ever on their lips, but first they praised three times consecutively His holiness. What is the sanctity of any creature compared with the holiness of God? "There is none holy as the Lord is" (1 *Kings* ii. 2).

II

From what has been said it can be seen that the intrinsic holiness of the divine essence exists apart from creatures, and would have existed just the same had He never created, or purposed creating, a single being; He would still have been the Holy of holies. From this inherent holiness of

God's it results that the laws which He has given to His children are, and must be, holy, for He is holy also in His laws.

For, as God loves Himself as the most supreme good above all things, He can lay down no other rules for His rational creatures than to love Him above all things, and to avoid everything that is not in conformity with His holy will. That is in a few words the whole substance of God's commands to men: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, thy whole soul, and thy whole mind; this is the greatest and the first commandment. On this dependeth the whole law and the prophets" (*Matt.* xxii. 37, 38, 40). These words are made use of by our Saviour, and they are also the law of the old covenant: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, thy whole soul, and with all thy strength" (*Deut.* vi. 5). This holy law is engraven in the souls of all rational creatures by their Maker, and in a sense the unreasoning creation comes under it also, for it, too, has a mission—to glorify and bear witness to God. Oh, if every heart were to beat in unison with the divine heart of God, with pure love for Him, what harmony, what peace, what completeness would be established in this world! Sin would be banished with envy, hate, war, strife, and all wrong-doing. Sorrow there still would be, suffering would remain, and illness and death, for these things, though evils indeed, are only such as tend to purify, test, and augment our charity toward God, and by increasing the measure of our love earn for us a higher degree of blessedness.

Because it is holy, God's law forbids all sin. God neither wills nor co-operates with evil. "Thou hast loved justice and hated iniquity" (*Ps.* xliv. 8). But it can not be otherwise than evident to us that God allows sin and, moreover, grievous and heavy sin, and that He leaves evil-doers free to follow their own course unchecked for long periods of time. It is true God does permit this wrong, but without detriment to His holiness; while allowing it He makes it serve His own ends and purposes, to manifest His patience, His mercy, His justice, to the profit of the good and the ultimate confusion of the sinner. His abhorrence of sin is as great as the love He bears Himself.

III

God's holiness shines forth in all that He does: "Holy is He in all His works" (*Ps.* cxliv. 17). The work of creation was holy, for everything was made for His glory and from the beginning He called His rational creatures to eternal blessedness, angels as well as men. "This is the will of God, your sanctification" (1 *Thess.* iv. 3).

We will now pass over all the works wrought by God in the course of ages, and will hurry on to the end of all things—death. Purgatory is a work of God and bears evidence to the holiness of Him who can not bear the least stain of sin in His chosen ones. "There shall not enter into it anything defiled" (*Apoc.* xxi. 27). The Judgment is a work of God, an act of justice, but also of holiness: "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire"; of a sanctity, therefore, which

banishes sinners from His sight—"Come, ye blessed of my Father"—a sanctity which unites the blessed to Himself for evermore. Hell is a work of God, and is not only an act of justice, but is also an indication of that holiness which pursues sin with eternal hatred. The Cross is a work of God, a deed of justice and mercy, it is true, but, more than all, it is the symbol of His holiness to which sin is so abhorrent that only the blood of the Son of God could move Him to look with clemency upon it. God is holy in all His works, for they all make manifest how highly He, the highest good, values and loves Himself, and how great is His detestation of all that opposes His holy will.

Holiness is that divine attribute which we can best imitate, and on which it is incumbent on us to model ourselves—"Be ye holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy" (*Lev.* xix. 2). It was sin and folly for our first parents to wish to make themselves like to God, knowing good and evil. It would be madness for us to think we could imitate God in His omniscience, His omnipresence, His almightiness. It is folly only to think of it, but His holiness we can and must follow after. "This is the will of God, your sanctification." It is the most important of all the duties that devolve upon us, for if we be not holy, we are lost. God has called us to sanctity and He Himself invites us and helps us to it. What numbers of the human race have attained it! It is not difficult, for nothing can hinder us from fixing our hearts on the supreme good; and to do so is the foundation of sanctity. What is to prevent us from keeping our-

selves ever turned to God, and loving Him above all things and everything for His sake—to work, to suffer, to endure, to live or die as God wills. "Wash me yet more from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sins; create a clean heart in me, O God, and renew a right spirit within me"—the spirit which wills what God wills, that hates what He hates, that loves what He loves. "Renew a right spirit within me." Amen.

## SERMON XV

### The Justice of God

*"Thou art just, O Lord, and Thy judgment is right"* (*Ps.* cxviii. 137).

TAKEN in one sense, justice and holiness are the same thing, but, in another sense, justice is much more the result and effect of holiness. Sometimes the term "justice" is employed to describe the possession of all virtues and perfections, and used in this way it is synonymous with holiness; but more commonly it designates that peculiar virtue by which we are prepared to give to every one what is due to them. Now, can it be said that anything is due from God to His creatures? He was not bound to create them, nor is He bound to sustain them. God's responsibility is not to us, but to Himself, to His own infinite holiness which demands that His dealings with us should be in keeping with His sanctity. We call God just, therefore, because He rewards good and punishes evil, dispensing recompense or exacting penalty according to the deserts of His creatures. Holy Scripture is full of passages in which God's decrees, His judgments, rewards, and punishments are praised and exalted.

Consequently, God's justice works in two ways: in rewarding and in punishing. Now it does not come hard to us to believe in the justice of God as the recompenser of all good, even of the slightest good desire, or of the cup of cold water given

in His name; we think it part of the natural order of things, right and consoling. But it is the rigor of God's justice which is frequently attacked, not only by unbelievers, but by Christians themselves. We will now, with the help of the Holy Ghost, examine three of the objections most usually brought forward against it, and we hope so clearly to refute them that they will only serve to impress on us more deeply the reason of God's justice, its perfection and its term.

I

The very goodness of God is the first objection raised. People say: "God is so good, so infinitely good; He loves His creatures and understands their frailty; He sees how they are tempted, how easy it is for them to fall. He is not a cruel tyrant, but, on the contrary, He is always ready to show mercy. It is inconceivable and impossible that so good a God could be so unrelenting toward His own creatures as to condemn them to hell fire for all eternity."

Who is it that speaks in this way? If it be godless men, unwilling to be converted, anxious to pursue their life of sin, we say boldly to them: "You extol God only in order to put to nought His justice; you exalt His mercy so that you may stifle the fear of His judgment. Such praise is sheer blasphemy." Does, then, the mercy and goodness of God not deserve to be praised? By all means, but not at the expense of His justice. It is delightful to see the father of a family dealing kindly and gently with the members of his household; but if his goodness goes such lengths

that he dare not find fault or correct, and is no longer master in his own house, it ceases to be a virtue or a good quality at all, and becomes sinful and blameworthy weakness. It is beautiful to see a sovereign ruling graciously, mildly, and indulgently over his people; but if he goes so far as to tolerate theft, murder, robbery and vice, allowing evil-doers to run riot and thus endangering the life, honor and property of his subjects, we can no longer admire his conduct; it has degenerated into mere laxity, by which the good of the State and the safety of the throne is jeopardized.

God is indeed good, and abundantly merciful. But He does not on the plea of mercy suspend His just judgments. God is the supreme good, and as such He loves and prizes Himself, and because He loves Himself as this highest good He detests all that is opposed to the best. His hatred of all that is evil is equal to His love of Himself. This hatred is efficacious not only in forbidding sin, but in attaching to it a punishment, as in the case of the first commandment given to man: "For on what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death." A law, the breaking of which involves no penalty, is void, and, because the hatred directed against sin is an efficacious hatred, so the punishments attached to it are not only threatened, but, in the case of an unrepentant sinner, are actually carried into effect. This is due to the reverence which God owes to Himself. If a man will not willingly follow God's commandments, then whether he likes it or not he is obliged to bear the punishment God metes out to him. If he refuses to glorify God voluntarily, then he must

perforce furnish an example of God's justice. This is necessary for our own well-being. God is so good one might think it would be easy to serve Him out of love, but how few do so! By far the greater number are faithful to Him not out of love, but from fear of His judgments. Greater still is the number of those who follow Him partly out of love, but who, when they find their love wavering and growing weak, strengthen their resolution against sin by thinking of the eternal punishments of hell. Greater than all is the number of those who neither from love nor fear of God allow themselves to be drawn away from evil, and who, although believing in God's justice, sin and sin grievously. O God, if the thought of hell be not powerful enough to keep us from evil, what would become of us if it were not for Thy just judgments! Passion would run riot, sin would know no limit, the inspirations of sorrow and penance would be of no avail. But God is just to punish; His justice was manifest on the threshold of heaven, when the earliest sinners, the fallen angels, were precipitated into hell; it showed itself when after their sin our first parents were turned out of paradise; we see it in the Crucifixion where the Son of Man gave His blood for our sins. It is exemplified in the awful prison of hell which encloses, never to release them, those who are the enemies of God.

II

We trust that the first bar to our recognition of God's justice, namely, the idea that He is too merciful to punish, is removed. We will now pass

on to the second objection, which is a yet more vicious one. It is said that here in this world the authority of man has established a system of punishment for wrong-doers which ought to satisfy the requirements of God's justice. No doubt we have tribunals and judgments, prisons and death sentences, to deal with men's offences against one another; this must always be so as long as we have a properly constituted human society. But the fact that these things are expedient for the protection of the community does not in any way render the exercise of God's right to punish superfluous. For from whom does earthly authority derive its power? From God and from God only; therefore, if authority derived from God claims the right to wield the sword of justice, shall we deny it to the Lord God Himself? But on what grounds and how far does human authority punish the evil-doer? He is punished according to the seriousness of his offense against society. But who can punish defiance of the majesty of God Almighty? He alone can do this. It is only external transgressions that come within the scope of human justice; the law, they say, takes no account of motives, but God, who searches the heart and the reins, can pronounce judgment on our most hidden sins. Moreover, legal justice is tied and bound down by the laws of evidence. But who is to punish the criminal against whom there is no legal testimony? Only He, surely, who is both witness and judge. Further, in order to deal with evil-doers the law must first detect them and then arrest and hold them fast; many succeed in evading detection, some avoid arrest by escaping

across the sea; often they die by their own hand before they are tried, and without paying the penalty. But the hand of God can reach them, be they in life or in death and eternity. And who is it that is set above all humanly constituted authority and over the judges themselves? Who is higher than the judge who lets the criminal go free and sentences the innocent to torture? Over Herod, the murderer of innocent children; over Caiphas, who declared God's Holy One guilty of death; over Pilate, who delivered Him to the bloodthirsty cruelty of the Jews; over the pagan emperors and governors who persecuted the Christians by thousands? No, truly, human justice is not far-reaching enough. It fails to cover all transgressions, or to grapple with every evildoer; its punishments are paltry and can not always be carried into effect; and often it is itself grossly unfair and, as regards its verdicts, sentences, and penalties, the greatest injustice of all. In view, therefore, of the shortcomings which are part and parcel of human judgments, the verdicts of the just God in which there is no shadow of flaw can not be held to be superfluous.

III

A third obstacle often placed in the way of belief in the rigor of God's justice is the aspect presented by the different fates in life which fall to the lot of the good and the wicked respectively. People say that it is hard indeed to put faith in the severity and equity of God's judgments when one sees people without religion or the fear of God, people who are full of untruth, deceit, and

unrighteousness, spending their lives in comfort, health, and happiness, while the children of God, who are upright and God-fearing and righteous, are struggling along, with sorrow and suffering for their daily portion. Is it fair that the unjust should live as blest as though they were saints, and the just be full of misery as though they were sinners?

Does this not actually happen? Is it not frequently the case? Yes, it does happen; but what is to be argued from it? Did any one ever assert that God dealt out His rewards and penalties fully in this life? Who was it told us the story of the rich man and Lazarus? Our Saviour Himself. The rich man in the parable is the complete type of the wicked, merciless, pitiless man; he was rich and strong; with good food and clothing in plenty. Lazarus is the very picture of a good man in adversity; poor, naked, sick, and hungry, he is treated with contempt and unkindness. What lesson did our Saviour wish to teach us by drawing this comparison? You hear people exclaim: "God does not make use of His justice to punish the wicked." Did Christ explain it in that way? No, He pointed to the other world as the place and time where things would be made equal. The rich man died and was buried in hell. Lazarus died and angels carried him to Abraham's bosom. This exactly answers your objection, for even though the wicked often prosper in this world, while the good seem never to meet with success, it furnishes no proof against the justice of God; because punishment and reward are not doled out equally here below, but are reserved for eternity.

What was the lot of St. Joseph in this world? Work, sorrow, and anxiety. And that of Christ's Holy Mother? Poverty and heartache upon heartache. And what of our Saviour Himself? Sorrow and death. And were they not just?

O my God, who can doubt that Thou didst fully requite them in another life? Let us, then, firmly believe in the justice of God. "Thou art just, O Lord, and Thy judgment is right" (*Ps.* cxviii. 137). And because Thou art just it is for me to fear Thy judgments. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. If I walk in the fear of God's judgments here on earth I shall experience in eternity the mercy with which He rewards His children. Amen.

## SERMON XVI

### The Goodness, Mercy, and Patience of God

*"For God so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son"* (*John* iii. 16).

PROCEEDING with our instructions and taking the perfections of God one after another in turn, we come next to the contemplation of the divine goodness. This attribute consists in dispensing benefits, and is closely akin to mercy and patience. We shall better understand these three qualities, their nature and relation to each other, if we seek with the help of the Holy Spirit to find the reply to the following questions:

I. What are the benefits which God dispenses?
II. To whom does He dispense them?
III. Why does He dispense them?

I

The goodness of God makes Him love all His creatures and shower innumerable blessings on them. It is characteristic of everything that is really good that it has the power of communicating itself to others, and allowing them to participate in it. A really good man, if he be wealthy, will share his money with the poor; if he be learned, he will give the ignorant the benefit of his knowledge; if he be skilled in medicine, he will bring his science to bear upon the sick.

God is the highest good, the substance of all good. What are the benefits He dispenses, or, in

other words, what blessings do we derive from Him? His first benefit to each of His creatures was that He created them; He gave them existence —even the lifeless stone exists; without God nothing would be—so that in calling us into being He has given us what no other than Himself could bestow, for none but He has the power to create. This gift of existence, which is the beginning and the foundation of all other benefits, is not of equal value for all, but for all it is a blessing. To inanimate things God has given mere existence, to the plants more than this, a kind of life, to the animals instinct and sensation, to the angels a spiritual nature endowed with right understanding and the free power of choice. And what has He bestowed on us human creatures? We have received from God the sum and substance of all the gifts which He has dealt out with such a generous hand to the rest of creation; in common with all creatures we have existence—we have life as plants have, power of motion and sensibility like the animals, an intellectual nature similar to that of the angels. God has placed us, as it were, in the center of creation, and made us kings of the earth to be served and obeyed by the whole visible world. "What is man, O God, that Thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that Thou dost visit him?" This is the cry of the prophet David, who continues: "Thou hast made him a little less than the angels; Thou hast crowned him with glory and honor and hast set him over the works of Thy hand; Thou hast subjected all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, moreover also the beasts of the fields, the birds of the air, and

the fishes of the sea that pass through the paths of the sea."

Next to the benefit of creation comes that of preservation. As without God nothing can come from nothing, so neither could it continue in existence for a moment without His support. When we kneel before God to return thanks to Him for all His benefits, we ought rightly never to rise up again, for each successive instant of life is a new favor for which we owe Him fresh gratitude.

If I go further and begin to count over God's goodness to us in the supernatural order of things, I find myself in a perfect ocean of mercies, which seems to have neither beginning nor end. We will pass these benefits shortly in review, using the sublime words of St. Thomas Aquinas in his hymn to the Redeemer, each one of the four lines of which seems to point out a fresh favor bestowed by God.

*Se nascens dedit socium.*—By becoming man He made Himself our friend, the companion of our poverty, our misery, and death.

*Convescens in edulium.*—At the last supper He made Himself our food. Not only has He given us His creatures for our use, but He has given us Himself to be our nourishment.

*Se moriens in pretium.*—In death he gave Himself for our ransom.

*Se regnans dat in praemium.*—In His kingdom He is Himself our reward.

O goodness of God! Can it go further than to lay at our feet all created things, and make Himself, the Creator of all things, our friend, our food, our ransom, and our reward?

II

On whom has God conferred these benefits? He has showered them on every creature, animate or inanimate, living and dead, rational or irrational, men and angels. He is full of love toward His whole creation and lavishes on it endless kindness.

But if out of creation we select the rational beings, and amongst them take men; and if among men single out and consider sinners, we shall see that God's goodness is shown and revealed in a special way to them; so much is this the case that two further perfections—the special attributes of our heavenly Father—I mean His mercy and patience, are now brought before us.

That God in His mercy should see fit to create the universe we can easily understand; and that having created it He should equip it with everything needful and useful is also perfectly comprehensible. But what is God's attitude toward those creatures who are rebellious and ungrateful to Him, and prove themselves to be His enemies? They may be divided into two classes: repentant and unrepentant sinners. How does God deal with sinners who repent? They have earned His chastisement; what prevents Him from letting it take its course? Nothing hinders Him except His own inconceivable mercy, which is ever ready to reconcile to Himself all those who crave His pardon. The offended majesty of God forgives and forgives readily, not only once, but every sin of which we repent. Even were our sins red as scarlet and as numerous as the sands on the seashore, they are all forgiven as soon as repentance enters the

soul, so completely that they are not even remembered. This token of God's infinite goodness, which goes beyond all other blessings and which Holy Scripture tells us surpasses all His works, we call by the name of mercy.

How does God demean Himself toward the unrepentant sinner? There is nothing to hinder Him from punishing the evil-doer on the spot, and sometimes, as in the case of the fallen angels, He does do so. It would be nothing very surprising, therefore, if the Almighty were to treat sinful man in the same way. But, oh, the incomprehensible goodness of God, which inclines to show tenderness even to the unrepentant and which stays His hand in order that there may be time for change of heart! God is quick to forgive, slow to punish; He was slow to punish Adam; He waited hundreds of years before sending the flood. His desire to compassionate flows from His own merciful heart; His laws of retribution are forced on Him by the hardness and obstinacy of men; He waits often, but not always. He waits a long time, sometimes for years and years, unto old age, through sickness, up to the day, even the very hour of death. What is He waiting for? He is waiting for the sinner to repent. Not only does He wait, but He calls the sinner by grace to return to Him, and showers His favors upon him. "The Lord is long-suffering and plenteous in mercy" (*Ps.* cii. 8).

The relation between these three attributes of God—goodness, mercy, and patience—may be summed up by saying that His goodness is poured out on every creature in blessings without number; that His mercy is manifested especially to re-

pentant sinners, in His constant readiness to forgive; His patience is displayed toward unrepentant sinners by granting them the inestimable boon of time; delaying His judgment in order that they may turn to Him.

III

We have now seen what God's benefits are, and on whom He confers them, and we ask ourselves what object God has in conferring them? When a man does a favor to another it is not seldom with the idea that it will give him the name of being benevolent, or perhaps it is because he hopes on another occasion to receive greater favors in return; and even when we do good to our neighbor from really Christian motives we still have, and are meant to have, the hope of earning the reward God offers to the charitable. But God's kindness is entirely disinterested; He lavishes His blessings out of pure goodness. He requires us, it is true, on account of His infinite holiness, to adore Him, and to love and thank Him. But whether we adore Him or not, whether we love and thank Him, or whether we neglect to do so, He remains equally great, equally glorious, equally blessed. He has no need of us; then why is He so good, so merciful, so patient toward us? If we were to devote years and thousands of years to thinking this over we should find no more profound answer than this: Because He is so good. When we reach the bottom of even a clear well we come in the end to mud and stones, so in the goodness of creatures deep down there is invariably some thought of self. But the charity of God

is entirely and absolutely disinterested, and has no foundation but that of His infinite love.

We must not end our instruction without asking ourselves what effect these perfections of God Almighty should produce upon our hearts.

What do I not owe Thee, O Lord, for the inestimable benefits which Thou hast showered upon me. Love begets love, and I owe it to Thee to love Thee with my whole heart and soul. But if I find it hard to pay this debt of love, I can at least thank Thee for all Thy favors. If a fellow-creature shows me a kindness I have no difficulty in acknowledging it, and to fail to express my gratitude to Thee, who hast given me everything, even Myself, would be, indeed the height of ingratitude.

What return can I make Thee, O my God, for Thy mercy? When I have fallen into sin I can at all events not delay to avail myself of Thy compassion. The Saviour did not turn away from the weeping Magdalen, nor from the Canaanite woman who cried to Him, nor from the woman taken in adultery; He did not despise the prayer of the publican; He did not condemn the apostle who denied Him, nor the persecutors of His Church, nor even those who crucified Him. Neither will He cast me off. At least, I will be careful not to misuse His merciful readiness to forgive me by committing fresh offenses heedlessly, as though one might safely run the risk of contracting disease, because doctors and medicines are so ready to hand.

How great is my indebtedness to Thee for Thy patience, O my God; I will repay Thee in ever so

small a way by not using it as a pretext for unrepentance. God has often withheld His punishments, but is this a proof that He will always withhold them? If He has already waited so long, is it a sign that He intends to go on waiting? If He stays His hand in order that we may have time for repentance, will He still be patient when He sees that He is only giving us fresh opportunities for making ourselves guilty in His sight, and that His mercy is turned into the corruption of sin? No, surely He will not.

O Lord, my God, I adore Thy patience and mercy, and I will glorify Thee by making the right use of them. "The mercies of the Lord I will sing forever" (*Ps.* lxxxviii. 1). May Thy eternal goodness be exalted, and may I have cause to praise and love it for all eternity. Amen.

## SERMON XVII

### The Truthfulness and Fidelity of God

*"He . . . was called faithful and true"* (*Apoc.* xix. 11).

We propose to-day, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to meditate on the two last of the divine attributes which it has been our purpose to consider in these instructions, namely, His truthfulness and His fidelity.

I

Let us begin with the truthfulness of God. Truthfulness or veracity is to be distinguished from truth. Truth implies accordance, either of a thing with what is known of it, or of what is known of it with the thing. Let us try to illustrate our meaning. A builder has to construct a church; he first forms a plan of it in his own mind, and then makes a sketch of his plan on paper. Here we have the design of the church that is to be. The building is put in hand, and the builder overlooks it, and sees that the work is carried out according to the plan made for it. If this is done, then the church is true to the forecast which the builder originally made of it in his mind. Next comes an artist and paints a picture of the church on canvas. This is a fresh presentation, and is a true one only if it represents the actual church correctly. Now God created all things and the mind of God conceived all things before He created them.

He made everything in accordance with His own eternal plan of them; so all things, therefore, may be said to agree with the designs of God, and one may assert of all created things that they are true. It is their fidelity to God's design that constitutes their truth. After their creation all creatures are to be apprehended by our minds, and if this perception of them agrees with what they actually are then our knowledge of them is true. This is what constitutes true knowledge. But can we say that God is true? Certainly. The Lord God apprehends Himself in the most complete manner; indeed His knowledge of Himself is His very essence, and His very essence is knowledge; therefore God is the very truth because His perception of Himself is in perfect accordance with what He actually is. Our Saviour has said, "I am the truth."

Further, truth is to be distinguished from veracity, although the latter, too, consists in an accordance—the accordance of the words which we speak with the thought that we think. For this reason God is the very truth who can neither deceive nor be deceived; all that God says is true.

That God is truthful in the highest possible degree is easy to explain and to understand. It is palpable and easy to grasp. When do we speak untruthfully? Sometimes because we are mistaken. For hundreds of years our forefathers believed that the sun revolved round the earth every twenty-four hours; they knew no better. But sometimes we are untruthful out of malice. The serpent spoke in Paradise: "You will not die; if you eat of it you will become like to God." This

was lying intentionally and knowingly, and had its root in self-interest. A lie always originates either in a wish to harm others, or out of fear, envy, hate, or greed. Every untrue word arises from a flaw in the understanding—ignorance, or in the will—wickedness.

Now it is your turn to answer, is it possible for God to be mistaken? Impossible, for He is omniscient. Can He purposely tell a lie? Impossible, He is infinitely holy. So, clearly, if God is omniscient and all-holy, it follows that His every word is true. If I know that a light has fallen into a barn of dry hay and straw, and that it is fanned by a violent storm of wind I can not help believing that a conflagration will be the result.

Moreover, Holy Scripture teaches in emphatic terms the truthfulness of God. "It is impossible for God to lie," said St. Paul (*Heb.* vi. 18). Note well, *impossible.* Our Saviour says of Himself that the Father who sent Him was truthful, He calls Himself the truth and the Holy Ghost the spirit of truth. From His truthfulness God derives one of His titles: "I saw the heavens open and He that sat upon Him was called faithful and true." Who is, then, called true? "And He hath on his garment and on His thigh written King of kings and Lord of lords" (*Apoc.* xix. 16).

We should recall to our mind the truthfulness of God when doubts arise in our minds about the teachings of our faith, when the words of unbelievers try to undermine the belief of our hearts, when books, writings, newspapers, come under our notice wherein our religious convictions are represented as false, untrue, and misleading.

We hold our convictions from God, who is the very truth; we learned them from the Church, which is guided by the Spirit of Truth. What room can there be for doubt—none. *State in fide!* Stand fast in the Faith and say with St. Paul: "I know whom I have believed—the God of truth."

We should try to produce in our own lives some reflection of God's infinite truthfulness. How can we do this? By abominating every form of deceit, and never under any circumstances having recourse to it, either to get out of a difficulty, or to play a jest, or to help ourselves in any way whatsoever. And, above all things, let parents look to this in the bringing up of their children, for a regard for truth is the very A.B.C. of education. To guard against untruthfulness is to guard against much evil, because lying prepares the way and gives rise to many sins, and makes opportunity and excuses for offending God. By protecting one's self and others from untruth we strengthen the bonds of friendship, we confirm family ties, we establish security in all the goings and comings and business of life, and consolidate the very foundations on which human society rest. Speech is a gift of God bestowed on us that we may declare the truth; we must not misuse or degrade it.

II

We will close by adding a few words about the fidelity of God. To say that God is faithful means that He performs what He promises, and carries out what He threatens, or, in other words, that

God keeps His promises and makes good His threats.

These attributes of God are easily to be deduced from His other perfections. Why is it that men promise so much and perform so little? Often their promises are not in the first instance made sincerely, and so end in smoke; but God's word is always truly given and faithfully redeemed. Further, men are subject to moods and changes, and are to-day of one mind, to-morrow of another; they frequently come to regret their most serious undertakings; but God is unchangeable. "He is not, like man, liable to alteration." More often still, insuperable obstacles rise up to prevent a man doing what he had engaged to do; he finds he has neither power nor strength nor influence to make good his word. But God is omnipotent; what He wills He can accomplish. Again it happens that in the course of time a man forgets what he said at an earlier period. But God is omniscient, and all things are constantly present to His mind. It is obvious that the reasons which cause the promises of men to remain unfulfilled do not exist for God. He is faithful. Holy Scripture, which is full of the praises of the divine fidelity, while it warns us not to lean too much on the word of man or on his wisdom or power, calls upon us earnestly to place the greatest trust in God. The Saviour says: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away." Nothing seems to us more real than the earth under our feet or the stars above our heads, but they are not nearly such realities as the promises and warnings of God. Truth and

faith form one of the descriptions of God: "And behold a white horse and He that sat upon him was called faithful and true" (*Apoc.* xix. 11).

We have not far to look for the application of these truths. Because God is so faithful, so infinitely faithful, we must rely with unshaken trust on His promises. O Lord! Thou keepest Thy word, and I will remember in my temptations, however strong, violent, frequent, and persistent they may be, that Thou art faithful, and allowest no one to be tempted beyond that which he is able. I will remember that Thou art faithful in thy work, and that the smallest thing done for Thee will not go unrewarded. I will remember in my sorrows that Thou wilt reward the sufferings of this world with eternal happiness. Friends may forsake me, the world may prove deceitful, and even the unstable happiness which this life offers may be denied me; but Thou art faithful in sorrow as in joy, in health as in sickness, in life and in death, not only in time but for eternity. I have already often promised Thee fidelity in baptism, in confession, in holy communion. I promise it now anew, and I will be true to my word, will drive far from me the smallest doubt that Thou wilt keep faith with me, and that my reward will be eternal life, which Thou givest to those who love Thee. Amen.

## SERMON XVIII

### The Existence of God

*"For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made"* (*Rom.* i. 20).

We have considered one after another the long sequence of the divine perfections: God's eternity and unchangeableness, His omnipresence, omniscience, wisdom, and power, His holiness and justice, His unending goodness, mercy, and patience, His truthfulness and fidelity. God is possessed, not only of all these attributes upon which we have made some attempt to meditate, but of an infinitely greater number which we have not touched upon, and in an infinitely higher degree and measure than we can conceive or imagine, much less express.

Now it may very well occur to you to say: But we have been told that God is an invisible spirit; how, then, when no one in this life has ever even seen Him, can so much be known of Him and His attributes as to supply material for all this discussion and writing, all this teaching and printing? How has all this knowledge been acquired?

God has Himself led men to know Him in various ways: (1) by the visible world, (2) through the voice of conscience, (3) by supernatural revelation. So we come to recognize God in three ways: by the visible world around us, by the voice of conscience within us, by the word of God above

us. We will follow the first of these three paths, and will consider to-day, with the help of the Holy Spirit, in what way the outer visible world raises our thoughts to the almighty Creator.

I

How does the outer and visible world point to an almighty God and Creator? Before answering this question we must lay a sure foundation, a firm groundwork on which we can afterward build. What is to form this groundwork? It is the very simple and understandable proposition that outside of us an outer visible world really does exist. This will be our foundation stone. Do you doubt that the sun, the moon, the stars, shine in the heavens; that the earth is under our feet, and is made up of alternating land and water, mountain and valley; that plants grow on it, that it is inhabited by man and beast? Do you feel any uncertainty on this subject? I am aware that a certain class of smart thinkers have gone so far as to question the existence of any outer world at all. It is, they say, nothing more than a waking dream, engendered by the workings of our own brain, just as the spider produces the threads of his web. But I can not believe that this theory was ever seriously entertained, or, if seriously entertained, I can not credit its ever having been acted upon. The originators of it walk with their feet upon the ground, they lift their food to their mouths and enjoy it just as we do. If they really consider the world an illusion, and carry that idea to its logical issue, they would become lunatics, fit for a mad-house. There can be no question

about this matter, and we are all agreed that the outer visible world really and truly does exist. This conviction is our foundation stone: more than that, it is a bridge, and if we use it it will surely conduct us to a knowledge of the existence of God.

How is that to be? On looking on the world which we see around us and on every part of it the question, "Where does it all come from?" ought to and does rise to our lips. By repeating often enough that question "where" we can not fail to be brought to the knowledge of God, for it is the key that opens the door to the whole mystery. Now let us test the strength of our bridge. Pick up the first good apple lying on the grass under a tree. Where does the apple come from? From the tree. Where does the tree come from? From the seed of an apple planted in the earth. Where did the seed come from? From an apple. Where did that apple come from, from a tree. How long need we keep up this wearisome repetition? We are following a long and tiresome path; let us find a shorter cut. If we go on repeating our question long enough we should come to a point where the answer loses its value. We get back either to the original tree which grew up without seed, or to the first seed which was taken from no apple, or to the first apple which did not grow on a tree. But where did these all come from? We must here vary our reply. Are you prepared to assert that the primary apple or tree or seed arose by chance, through the accidental combination of certain elements, much in the way that rain falling on and mixing with the

dust of the street gives rise to mud? Although this theory is contrary to experience, let us for a moment suppose it to be true, and lay it down that the first apple, or tree, or seed arose through the accidental mingling of certain substances. Very well. But where did these substances come from? They had already been in existence under a different form long ages before. All right; but we must not give up, and we will go on asking "where did it come from?" till we get these substances in their primary shape and form, and reduce them to raw material; and we demand therefore a reasonable answer to our final query: Did they produce themselves? Is anything self-producing? It is impossible and is a more irrational supposition than if we were to expect a man to see without eyes. So, clearly, these substances did not come into existence of themselves. How, then, did they get here? Were they created by men or angels? Men and angels can not create, and if they could we would have to find out where they themselves came from, and continue our questionings till we got back to the first creature which sprang into being when no one else existed, and then we should again have to ask, "Where did he come from?" We must find a cause, a complete, far-reaching, satisfying cause, which will make clear to us how the first creature originated. To this inquiry there is but one answer. There is a Cause from which all creation springs; a Cause which has given rise to all things, but was Itself never made; a Cause that is the origin of all things, but had Itself no beginning; a Cause powerful enough to draw life out of nothing; and

this Cause is no other than almighty God. Those who deny the existence of God gain no advantage by drawing out the chain indefinitely, for we must sooner or later reach the starting point. They may go on asserting that man developed from animals, and animals from plants, and that the seed of the first plant came from a star falling on the earth. It does not alter matters to assure us that the earth was once a liquid body and that further back still it consisted of transparent vapor, and that the entire universe is but the ruin of an earlier world which perished ages ago, and that this vanished world was not even the primary universe. What is the outcome of all this stuff and nonsense? We can not in this way brush God aside. Let thousands and hundreds of thousands of years be heaped together, together with millions of annihilated worlds, which each in their turn give birth to a new universe. As in the case of the apple and the tree, we reach back to the first world and its primary state and ask, from whence did this first world come? Can a different answer be found than the one we have already given? No, a thousand times no!

II

If there was nothing in the whole wide world more than a few blades of grass, they would be sufficient to prove the existence of an almighty God, for they could not have come into existence without the power of God which created them. And now raise your eyes to the heavens on a clear starry night. Do not the constellations bear

clear though silent witness to God, and seem to say: "Yes, there lives an almighty God"? The prophet Baruch writes of them: "They were called and they said here we are, and with cheerfulness have they shined forth to Him that made them" (*Bar.* iii. 35). In the Psalms it is said, "the heavens show forth the glory of God and the firmament declareth the work of His hands" (*Ps.* xviii. 2). Glance at the sea; the cry of the rushing waves is: "There lives an almighty God." All creatures, hill and valley, brute and man, earth and heaven, call out with a thousand united voices so loudly and clearly that even the deaf must hear: "There lives an almighty God." Without Him we are nothing, without Him we could not exist. If you notice the print of a human foot in pure, freshly-fallen snow, even though no one is visible, you know that a man has passed that way. You gaze on a beautiful picture; you have not seen any one engaged in painting it, but you know that it is the work of an artist. You enter a great cathedral; you have not heard of the architect, but without reflecting you feel at once that the plans were drawn up by a master hand. Look round about you. In the visible world, so great and beautiful, so vast and wide, can you see no trace of the almighty hand of God? Yes, it is true. If a world exists, certain it is that there is an almighty God who created it. "For the invisible things of Him, from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood from the things that are made" (*Rom.* i. 20). St. Paul says that the heathen that does not know God is without excuse, for from the

things of the visible world he might have discovered Him.

How iniquitous it is that the clear evidence of such numberless witnesses, who all bear testimony to God, should be disregarded. Indeed, dearly beloved brethren, I am quite sure you are not among the ranks of those who deny Him, but it seems to me expedient and useful, considering the times in which we live, to strengthen our belief in the existence of the divine Being, for on this belief depends all religion, all order among nations, the holiness of families, the sanctity of an oath, the power of conscience, indeed one might say the regulation of the entire universe. Let us pray, therefore, out of the fulness of our heart: "I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth." What dignity this belief bestows upon the soul. We need not say to the earth, "Thou art my mother," nor to the dust, "Thou art my father"; we have God for our Father. What an honor to be allowed to serve such a Master, Creator and Lord of the universe! What rewards may we not hope for from Him, what happiness to be allowed to love Him! He says to thee: "My Son, give Me Thy heart" (*Prov.* xxiii. 26). O my God, how would it be possible not to love Thee, who art my creator, my lord, my king, my sanctifier; Thou lovest me and askest my love in return. I will love Thee above all things, Thou who art the source of my life, for surely it is but right that the Creator should be loved above everything that He creates. "What have I in heaven and besides Thee what do I desire on earth?" Here below I find only creatures

who are either equal to me, or who rise a little higher or who sink a little lower than I do. But "Thou art the God of my heart and my portion forever" (*Ps.* lxxii. 26). Amen.

## SERMON XIX

### The Existence of God

*"She reacheth therefore from end to end mightily"* (*Wis.* viii. 1).

We saw last Sunday that we are led in three different ways to the knowledge of God. Firstly from what we see around us, secondly from what we feel within us, and thirdly from what God's own word tells us. It is open to us to examine the first of these three ways from different points of view, directing our attention either to the origin of the things we see in this world, or to the wonderful order which governs them. If once we begin to inquire into the causes of things we need take but one step, so to speak, to find ourselves face to face with God; for, as it is true that the world exists, so is it true that it did not create itself, and that only at the command of an almighty Being could it have sprung into life. There is no smoke without fire, and a great universe points to a mighty Creator.

This is the ground which we traveled over last week, and now we propose to-day to contemplate the order, the systematic order, of the universe, and we shall surely find that this road also leads us to the same conclusion. With the help of the Holy Spirit let us, therefore, consider these two points:

I. That the universe is ruled with order and purpose.

II. That this order and purpose are the work of the wisdom of an omniscient Creator.

I

It is impossible to deny that an outer world exists, and it is equally impossible to refuse to recognize the order and purpose which govern it as well as the whole universe. Let us glance at the course and disposition of the stars, especially of the planets. What marvelous bodies they are! Consider their size, their number, their variety; and yet with what regularity, swiftness, and punctuality they accomplish their course. After revolving for thousands of years they are never one moment too late or too early. The best watch will gain or lose a minute or two, and after a few years will require to be done up and regulated, and finally it will stop and be of no further use. Look at the light which illumines space. Who can deny that it would have existed to no purpose, if no eye existed to see by it, and that eyes, in their turn, would be of no avail if there were no light. Consider the atmosphere which is diffused over the whole surface of the globe. While it is obviously made to correspond to the needs of our lungs, the lungs are so constituted as to breathe it in and out. In the same way the ear is made for sound, and sound for the ear; and who will deny that the tongue is made for speech? A similar purpose pervades the entire world, and whole volumes would not suffice to point it out in each separate instance. In examining the human frame it would be difficult to decide which member of it might be removed with-

out altering its beauty and appropriateness; not one could be spared, neither could they be added to. The ancient poets wrote of a one-eyed man, and painters have tried to depict him on canvas, but the result was a ghastly caricature. On the other hand, it has been recognized even by non-Christian writers that so much as an additional finger would be a burden to the human body.

Consider well, that the more closely we look into things the more complete does this purpose and appropriateness appear to be. What a variety of things there are in the world, many of them inanimate! What numbers of different kinds, classes, and species of plants, from the cedar of Lebanon down to the hyssop, which, as Holy Scripture tells us, grows out of the wall! Each plant has its own peculiar leaf, blossom, and fruit, with characteristic color and shape. What countless kinds and sorts of animals are in existence! Sixty thousand different species of beetles alone are said to be known to science. I was reading a paper lately on ants, written by a specialist on the subject, and he stated that a certain learned society in Holland had published thirty thick volumes dealing with all the different kinds of ants in the world; the paper went on to complain that these volumes are most incomplete, and that there are still many kinds which they omit to mention. Again every ant and every animal has its own peculiar form and organism, its appointed number of limbs, its own mode of taking nourishment, its own means of movement, whether through the air, in the water, or on land. Lift up your eyes to the Milky Way glimmering

in the midnight sky; the millions of stars that compose it can not be counted, and they are at such a distance as is immeasurable. Now look down to the worm crawling in the dust at your feet. Can you, will you dare, deny that the greatest things which can not be reached with the telescope, as well as the tiniest atoms invisible to the most powerful magnifying glass, all form part of one mighty system? Yes, indeed, order reigns, and order of the most uniform character, so that all things work together and form one great system. It is a complicated system, for so many different things contribute to it. A chronometer worked by a thousand wheels is more difficult to regulate than one which has only half a dozen. It is a very subtle and artistic system—for the greatest minds of all centuries have failed to grasp or discern the secret of its operations. A very efficient system—because the more intricate the mechanism, the more easily the machine gets out of order; but this one has lasted since the beginning of the world.

II

Now we come to our second point, who originated this perfect system? Has it no purpose? I know very well what is said: "It is the work of chance. The whole world is made up of tiny little atoms so small that no eye can see them, so microscopic that probably a million of them could fit on the point of a needle; so numerous that they can not be counted. These minute bodies have each a certain motion; they run, fall, rise, fly upward, downward, forward, backward; over

each other, against each other, through each other, on each other, sometimes one way, sometimes another way. In all this motion these atoms come into contact with each other and form thousands and thousands of different combinations, and in this way they gave rise to the material world; and who can say after how many failures and false adjustments, at last by a fortunate chance, this universe, which now looks to us as though it had been ordered with so much forethought and purpose, suddenly developed.'' In truth a fine explanation of the magnificent structure of the world! Where are the materials? The atoms? Where are the masons and the laborers? The movement? Where is the plan? There is no plan. Where is the builder? There is no builder. This marvelous structure has grown up by chance! By chance! Chance would not explain the tiniest hut! Pagan writers themselves have pointed out the folly of this theory, and I will reproduce their thoughts on the subject, making only a few slight alterations. Take your prayer-books and tear out one page after another and let them loose on the wind. Do you believe the wind will ever restore them and put them back in the order in which they were in the book; and this not only in the case of one book, but of them all? If the wind were to blow to the end of the world that would never happen. How would it be, if with a pair of scissors, we cut up every page line by line, and separated the letters of each line one from the other, and then scattered all these fragments, either on the winds or the waves? Does any one seriously believe that the letters, the

words, or the pages of a single book will ever find themselves together again? No one believes it. The world contains more than the pages, words, and letters of a book. Is not the smallest leaf off a tree more artistically put together than any book in existence? and you would suggest that this whole great purposeful world is a work of chance! Not a hair of your head grew by chance; purpose and system are the work of a dispensing and thinking Deity who knows what His object is and the means to be directed to its accomplishment. The constitution of the universe is the work of a Mind, and what is that Mind? One to whom all things with their qualities, nature, powers, and size are known; one that possessed from the beginning, without aid of books or teachers, a complete comprehension of all things—an omniscient Mind; one to which all things were obedient and arranged themselves as He ordained—an omnipotent Mind; and one that was present in all things exterior and interior; an omnipresent Mind. In a word, the system of the universe can only emanate from that Mind which created it.

This world points so clearly and distinctly to the almighty Creator that only very little thought on our part is necessary to bring us to the knowledge of God. The existence of God is so palpable a truth that the most enlightened among the Pagan races clearly recognized it and bore witness to it, at least in part, in their writings, and even the savage tribes have never been at any time wholly without religion, but have always had their gods and their sacrifices. Plutarch says it would be easier to find a place devoid of sun, than a

people without God, and the Holy Scripture dubs straight away as fools those who deny Him. St. Paul, in speaking of those who refuse to acknowledge their Creator, said they are without excuse, for they have His works by which to study Him. The existence of God is so distinctly revealed to us in creation that the Church excludes from her fold, not only those who do not believe in the existence of God, but likewise those who say that in the strict sense of the word it can not be clearly proved.

Let us thank God for calling us early to His certain knowledge; let us suppress the suggestions of passion which try to make God and His existence doubtful to us; let us avoid the friends, the books, and the writings which attempt to undermine our convictions. I believe in God; He is the beginning and the end, the alpha and the omega; He is my light in life, my hope in death, and He will be my happiness in eternity. Amen.

## SERMON XX

### The Existence of God

*"For the Gentiles who have not the law . . . show the work of the law written in their hearts"* (*Rom.* ii. 14, 15).

We have already seen in what way the universe leads us to the knowledge of the true God. This world is a reality and must have had a first cause competent to produce it, and this first cause can be no other than the almighty God and Creator. The whole world is ordered with a purpose and a system which can only be the work of an all-wise being, who, knowing all things to their innermost depths, rules and directs them—and that being is the omniscient, all-wise, and almighty God.

But we have also within us a world, from which we can learn to know God, His holiness and justice. Every human soul can testify that the human heart longs for happiness—complete happiness. The suicide, in the very act of taking his life, is seeking to be delivered from a state of misery and to attain a better condition; he thirsts for happiness. This longing is indestructible; but it can never be satisfied on this miserable earth. Is it, then, to remain always unsatisfied? If so, man is a being who has an end which is unattainable. But if this end can and must be attained, then there must also be a God, in whom the soul finds all things, and in whom everything

is to be possessed and enjoyed, and every desire of the heart gratified.

I am indicating these things only in the most cursory manner. We feel within us not only a longing for happiness, which obliges us to have recourse to God as our last end and aim; but also the voice of conscience which makes us aware of Him as our Creator and Master. Let us take for our consideration under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, two simple points:

I. That the voice of conscience is actually present within us.

II. That the source of this voice can only be God.

I

The voice of conscience is actually present within us. We will examine a little more closely what this means. In the first place, conscience tells us the difference between good and evil; it is both teacher and counselor. Truly all men as soon as they come to the use of reason draw a distinction between right and wrong. These words exist in all languages and they would not have come into use had right and wrong been one and the same thing; nevertheless, conscience is not only our teacher and counselor, it is also our law-giver. It not only tells us what is right and what is wrong, but it urges us to do the one and to avoid the other. Do the promptings of conscience really amount to a law? Yes, indeed, they do, and one which has all the signs and tokens of a genuine one. The ordinary and popular definition of a law is that it is the constant and bind-

ing ordinance of authority for the common good. Very well, let us see if we find in conscience all that goes to make up a law.

Is conscience an ordinance? Certainly it is, for its voice tells us what to do and what to leave undone. Is it a constant ordinance? Who can doubt it? A law must represent something permanent for many people, and must provide for numerous contingencies, and embrace many places, otherwise it would be in the nature of a passing command, a single recommendation or instruction. In the voice of conscience we have truly a permanent ordinance; it speaks to all, old and young, Christian and Pagan, saint and sinner; its value is life-long. The voice of conscience has the same weight now that it possessed hundreds and thousands of years ago, and it will retain this power as long as there are rational creatures; it is a constant ordinance. Human laws can be altered, improved, and repealed; but the law of conscience is for all time.

Are the commands of conscience directed to the general good and to the benefit of the whole community? Do you not think that if every one were under all circumstances to follow the dictates of conscience it would prove highly beneficial to the world at large? It would bring happiness to the individual; it would mean peace of soul, contentment in families, the well-being of all communities, the happiness of nations and people, and the salvation of the whole human race in time and eternity.

And are the impositions of conscience made known to us with sufficient clearness? A law is

of no avail if it be not sufficiently promulgated. How, then, is the law of conscience brought home to us? Through our reason! The laws of the Romans were cast in metal on twelve tables of bronze which stood in the market-place of Rome. The laws of the Jews were written on tables of stone, and were read aloud frequently to the people. The laws of nations are announced in the public press. But the law of conscience is written in the heart of each one of us. Every child recognizes its voice as soon as reason awakens, and it reaches the aged on the threshold of the grave when eyes are dim and hearing gone. The most hardened sinner hears it before he sins, while sinning, and after his sin. No law has ever been more clearly proclaimed than that of conscience. Human laws can be made known by means of the voice which echoes and dies away and does not reach every one; or by writing, which every one has not power to read; or by language which is not comprehensible to all. But the law of conscience is planted in the center of the soul; every one sees it, every one hears it, every one reads and understands it.

But the principal quality of a law is to enforce obedience, to impose an obligation. Do we find this distinguishing mark in the law of conscience? Yes, certainly; it is a binding law; it says, "Yes, you must do this; but you are forbidden to do that"; it praises us when we obey, it blames us when we disregard it. More than this, it rewards us for docility and punishes us for revolting against it; for it is universally recognized that the peace of a good conscience which has nothing

to reproach us is the best relish at the banquet of life; and that, contrariwise, a bad conscience troubles and torments us more than any human punishment has power to do. King Theodoric ordered an innocent man in his employ to be executed. There was no one who could accuse the king, blame him, judge or punish him, but his conscience punished him. Shortly afterward a fish was served up to the royal table and the head of the fish appeared to the king to be that of his victim; this sight so horrified him that three days later he died. The law of conscience is a binding law. All irrational creatures are acted upon by the laws of nature. Planets revolve round the sun, held by the force of gravitation. Water runs downward driven by the same law. Rational creatures are also ruled by a law which ties and binds them, not of necessity or in spite of themselves, but with a moral force, that is, by the law of conscience. If this law is not binding, where shall we look for one that is? If it is not binding then the difference between right and wrong must be done away with, children need no longer be required to obey their parents or servants their masters, or subjects of any kind their superiors, and the whole constitution of the moral world must fall asunder; for the law of conscience is a fixed, clearly-defined, and binding law, directed to the good of the whole of society.

II

Every law necessitates a law-giver. Let us now inquire who is the author of this law revealed by conscience. Is it man himself? Well, but how

does it happen that every one hears the voice of conscience and that it speaks in the same way to people who in other respects differ so widely? Moreover, what men have built up they can destroy, and therefore why do ne'er-do-wells, robbers, murderers, adulterers, deceivers, not abolish this voice, these tiresome warnings, this worrying, fault-finding, this terrible torment? They have tried often enough, but they can not succeed, for it is written in their hearts by a stronger hand than theirs.

Is it possible that this law is human work, that it is the result of our education, teaching, or surroundings? No, it is impossible. Education is conducted on such varied lines, and in so many cases is conspicuous by its absence. But every one has a conscience, and to all it says the same thing. Education can certainly do a great deal to awaken it, to enlighten and refine it, but it can not produce it. The agriculturist prepares the earth for sowing by breaking it up, raking it over, and manuring it; he can foster the growth, but he can not produce a single grain of seed.

The law of conscience is one that we have not laid down for ourselves and that no human being has imposed upon us; it comes from a law-giver who has power over the inmost being of every reasonable creature—an almighty Law-giver. One who can fully reward all good, and adequately punish all evil, even that which has escaped the eye of man—a just Law-giver.

See how the voice of conscience bears witness to God. As truly as their lives a holy, just, and almighty God, so truly is this law engraven in

our souls. When conscience speaks to us let us remember whose voice it is. If we listen to it and respect and obey it, it will be our happiness in life, our comfort in death, our reward in eternity. Amen.

## SERMON XXI

### The Existence of God

*"I am the first, and I am the last, and beside Me there is no God"* (*Is.* xliv. 6).

As we have already several times told you, we come to the knowledge of the true God in three ways. Firstly, by the contemplation of the universe, which could not exist and endure without an almighty and all-wise God, to create, order, maintain, and govern it; secondly, by the inner life of conscience, whose voice can only be that of a holy and just God. And now there is yet a third way that leads us to know God even more nearly; namely, the supernatural revelations made to us by God Himself, under the Old as well as under the New Law. In our instruction to-day I propose to follow up this third way.

When we see the prints of human feet in freshly fallen snow we at once say to ourselves that a man has gone past. If we examine a little more closely, we can find out if he took large or small steps, also the direction from which he came, and in which he was going; while the size of the footprint will tell us if it was a child or a grown-up person. I have read that some semi-savage tribes are able, with a fair amount of certainty, to recognize from the marks of the feet in the dust of a road if the traveler was walking fast or slow, and whether he was tired and carried a burden. There is no doubt that our footprints

reveal a great deal about us, but they do not tell everything. We can not read from them the name of a person, nor his social standing and intentions; but how would it be if we joined company with the stranger and he became our traveling companion? He could tell us a great deal that the footprints did not disclose, about his home, his family, his position in life; also the length, the origin, the end, and purpose of his journey. His conversation would certainly be more illuminating than footprints.

You can easily guess my object in giving you this illustration. The world round about us, as well as that which is within us, bears innumerable traces of the almighty, omniscient, and beneficent hand of God, not only as a whole but in every part and detail. But God has not only displayed before our eyes the traces of His handiwork; He has done a great deal more than this. He Himself has spoken to us, and has made the most complete and real disclosures about Himself. "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets," writes St. Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews—that was under the Old Law—"in these days hath spoken to us by His Son" (*Heb.* i. 2)—that is the New Law.

Yes, under the Old Law God spoke to the patriarchs, to Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and to a long line of prophets. He made many revelations concerning Himself, and to the Pagans He laid stress on His being not only the true God, but the only God. "Hearken, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one only." "See

ye that I alone am and that there is no other God beside Me" (*Deut.* xxxii. 39). He spoke in this way to Moses and to Isaias when He said: "I am the first and I am the last and besides Me there is no God" (*Is.* xliv. 6). One must certainly admit that the enlightenment of the people of Israel, compared to the knowledge of the heathens, was as brightness to shadow, or as sunshine to moonlight. In the moonlight the outlines of a landscape stand out; but what a much clearer view we get when the same scene is lit up by a flood of sunshine. Under the New Law the knowledge of God shines forth yet more brightly by the advent of the Son of God to be the light of the world. "No man" (by this is meant no earthly creature) "hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father who hath declared Him" (*John* i. 18). God confirmed and amplified the revelation of the Old Law by manifesting to us the holy persons of the Godhead, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; by making known to us His merciful decrees; by giving us tidings of our heavenly home and of the eternal requital. Open the Holy Scripture at any place you like; you will not find a page, hardly a line, which does not treat of God, His nature, His decrees, His works, His perfections.

All things, then, unite in bearing witness to the existence of an almighty, all-wise, and holy God: the world without, the world within, and the word of God above. But, you will say, if it be so incontrovertible that there is a God, how do you explain that in spite of this so many people think, say, and write, and even undertake to prove that

He does not exist? That there have been and still are such people must be admitted, and further than this we are bound to acknowledge that never before has the number of those who deny God been so great as it is at present. At all times there have been instances of learned men who brought the existence of God under discussion, but these were only individuals, and they were always to be found amongst students, and those who aspired to erudition. But to-day the denial of God has spread to the lower classes, and what is said in a higher social sphere, is echoed a hundred thousand times among the lower orders. We not only have infidels and unbelievers among the learned; but all kinds of workers, servants, laborers, and peasants undertake to assure us that there is no God.

What is the reason of this? First let me call your attention to one point. Atheists shelter themselves behind knowledge; the standard-bearers of unbelief are men of learning, but the danger does not lie there. No one has yet refuted the proofs of the existence of God, and no one ever will, because they are surer than the stars in heaven. Everything that has been said and written against them is easily answered.

There is very little in the reputation for learning which atheists have acquired. If we take the names of all the learned men ever since knowledge existed and classify them like the stars of heaven, dividing them into stars of the first, second, and third magnitude, and so on up to the tenth or twelfth magnitude, we find what is very consoling. The stars of the first magnitude, in

other words the philosophers of the first rank, Pagan as well as Christian, under the old order as well as under the new, are unanimous in declaring there is a God. Those who assert the contrary are all stars of the second or even the third class—pedants, theorists, talkers, charlatans.

One must not think, therefore, that erudition leads to atheism. On the contrary, the branch of human learning which has developed beyond all others is the science of nature. Every day thinkers discover new powers, new laws, greater purpose, greater consistency in the works of God. The deeper they penetrate, the more they discover, and the more apparent it becomes that the world can only be the work of one author. So even a glance at the dial and the hands of a clock makes it apparent to us that it emanates from a thinking mind, but the more closely the mechanism is examined the less possible it appears to us that it could be the work of blind chance.

If knowledge does not lead to the denial of God, what is it, then, that does? It is sin; sin which takes a double form: the sin of the flesh and the sin of the intellect.

Taken in a wide sense the sins of the flesh are those passions which are directed to satisfying the body and all its appetites, cupidity, intemperence, unchastity. "For wisdom will not enter in a malicious soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sins" (*Wis.* i. 4). An eye full of dust and dirt can see neither deep, nor far, nor clearly. "But the sensual man," says St. Paul, "perceiveth not

those things which are of the spirit of God" (1 *Cor.* ii. 14).

And even if he did grasp and understand, he would resist the knowledge. Sore eyes can not bear the light and turn away from it, and the vicious man can not endure the truth. The thought of an omniscient God who knows all the foulness of his soul, of a just God who punishes wickedness eternally, is unbearable to him. He shakes off all misgivings with the reflection: "There is most likely no God; there *is* no God." What have we to say of the lives of atheists and infidels? Are they, as a rule, marked by their restraint, their self-sacrifice, their love of others, and their innocence? Far from it; atheism does not grow on that soil; it flourishes best under the protection of excess, in the caves of impurity, in regions of immorality; it is there that atheism thrives, luxuriantly and copiously, like the marshmallow in swampy ground. No doubt there are unbelievers who are good and sincere, but they have mostly inherited the legacy of the sins of others.

The other *sin* which leads us to turn away from belief in God *is* the sin of intellect—pride, which precipitated the angels into hell, and takes hold of every human heart, but especially of those who are highly gifted, honored, praised, and looked up to. It is easy for them to reach the stage when they will be subject to no one but themselves, when they will acknowledge no laws but those of their own making, and accept no truths but those they themselves have discovered. They want to be like God, and on this account they deny

Him, and grace is withdrawn from them; it is, then, no wonder that they then think and say there is no God. What fearful scandal is given in this way by highly-endowed minds to their less-gifted brethren! Do not believe what they say. Never listen to any one who speaks at the prompting of wounded pride; even should they have the eloquence of an angel and furnish every proof cut and dried, do not put faith into them, do not listen to them.

There is a God from all eternity. It is easy to make good this proposition, and that is exactly why there are so many unbelievers. It is the foundation stone of our whole spiritual and moral life. Let us thank God that this conviction is alive in our hearts, but let us also make the practical application which is needed for our own lives. There is a God, who is my Master, and I must serve Him. He is omniscient and almighty; therefore, I must surrender myself entirely to His fatherly care. He is also a just God; therefore, my labors, my prayers, my sufferings are not without purpose. He is an infinitely perfect God, an abyss of perfection, and it is He whom I ought to love with all the strength of my heart.

Rejoice, then, my brethren, that there is a God to whom you can say: "Our Father who art in heaven"—for He is your Father; "hallowed be Thy name"—the glory of God should be the law of your life; "Thy kingdom come"—the kingdom of God is what we hope for; "Thy will be done" —we will resign ourselves in all things to His holy will; "give us this day our daily bread"—

only pray and all things will be given to you. You will obtain forgiveness of your sins, and strength and protection against temptation; and, finally, you will receive the only true good—eternal life. Amen.

## SERMON XXII

### The Holy Trinity

*"And there are three who give testimony in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one"* (1 *John* v. 7).

The opening words of the first article of the Creed, "I believe in God," have afforded matter for a long series of meditations on the essence, the attributes, and the knowledge of God. But we do not assert merely, "I believe in God"; we supplement this by adding something to it, and saying, "I believe in God the Father almighty." Let us pause to-day on this one word "Father." We have two reasons for calling God our Father: the first, because He is actually the Father of all mankind, who made us all, loves and preserves us all. A child is indebted to his father for life, shelter, food, and clothing, and, greatest obligation of all, for the love he bears him. Do we owe God less than this? On the contrary, a thousand times more, for without Him we should be nothing. His goodness provides for our bodily and spiritual needs, for our temporal and eternal welfare with more than paternal care, and His love for us surpasses that of any father. So it is fitting we should give Him this sacred title. Secondly, we call Him by this name because there are in God three persons, of whom the first is the Father, the second the Son, and the third the Holy Ghost. This word "Father" leads us to the

consideration of three persons in one God—the mystery of the Blessed Trinity.

We will divide our instruction into three principal parts:

I. The number of the divine Persons.
II. In what they are one.
III. Where they are distinct.

I

Let us ask the question of the catechism. "How many persons are there in God?" "In God there are three divine persons, really distinct and equal in all things—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." To understand this answer we require a clear idea as to what is meant by a person. It would never occur to us to use this expression in describing an animal, for instance, or a tree, or a stone, but we should apply it to any rational creature. Angels also are persons; so to be a person it would seem necessary to have either a rationally or a spiritually constituted nature. So far, so good; but we must make this plainer. Is, then, a rational nature sufficient to constitute a person, and can we count as many persons as there are natures, and natures as there are persons? No, we can not. In God there is one nature, but three persons. No, the words "nature" and "person" must represent different values. What is this difference? By a "person" we understand one endowed with reason, the holder, the possessor, the owner of a rational nature.

Amongst men and angels the number of persons to natures, and natures to persons, correspond. Nature and person are convertible terms.

But it is not so with God—in Him there is one nature, but three persons.

How do we know that there are three persons in God? Not from the visible creation. It certainly makes clear to us the existence of God, but it reveals nothing definite about the number of the divine persons; and the voice of conscience within us is equally reticent. The number and name of the three persons are made known to us by supernatural revelation. In the Old Testament we find already foreshadowings of this mystery—God, before the creation of the first man, said: "Let us make man to our own image and likeness." Here we have God represented speaking to Himself, and speaking not in the singular, but in the plural, as if one of the divine persons was addressing the others: "Let us make man to *our* own image and likeness." The dim foreshadowings of the Old Testament became clear, definite, and reiterated in the New Testament. We have for example the moment which marks the first unfolding of the mystery of the Redemption. The angel said to Mary: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee, and therefore also the Holy One which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." We find here the entire Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, referred to in one sentence. Consider, also, that solemn ceremony with which Our Lord opened His public life. At His baptism in the Jordan the voices of the Father and the Son both make themselves heard, and we have the visible manifestation of the Holy Ghost under the

form of a dove. Take the occasion of Our Lord's ascension into heaven. "Teach ye all nations," He said to His apostles on the Mountain of Olives, "baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost"—three names, the names of three persons, the names of three divine persons—for only in the name of God can men be baptized. What the Saviour revealed formed the teaching of the apostles; and their teaching is voiced by the Church; and the doctrine of the Church has been believed and is still believed by her children up to this very hour. Whoever does not accept the mystery of the Blessed Trinity—three persons in one God—can not be a member of that Church.

II

Further, it is to be considered, in what consists the unity of these three persons. The catechism defines it for us by saying, "these three persons are one and the same God, having one and the same divine nature." In other words they have not only the name of God, but are in fact what the name implies. The toy which a father gives to his little son may be called a horse, but it is not really one, and the resemblance it bears to the genuine article is very superficial and far-fetched. But each of the three divine persons is really God.

All the three persons are alike in this, that they all possess the divine attributes in the same degree. They are all eternal and are equally holy, omniscient, and powerful; in short, equally perfect.

Now, the fundamental reason why all these three persons are called God, and all agree in possessing the same perfections, is that they are in their essence and nature one and the same; and this brings us back to the point from which we started, namely, the difference between a person and a nature. A person is the owner, the proprietor, so to speak, of a rational nature. Can the same nature belong to more than one person? To this we must reply, yes. Not so many years ago the whole of Europe was interested in the appearance of two remarkable creatures—twins born in Asia—whose bodies had grown together in so extraordinary a manner that they were tied to each other and actually possessed various parts of their bodies in common. Supposing them to have had only two arms between them, one had just as good a right to claim them as the other and say: "That is my arm." When one wrote the other did the same, and each would be enabled to assert: "That is my writing." Imagine if they had had only one heart! The heart-beats of the one would then have been the heart-beats of the other. Can we in the same way imagine two souls in one body? Most certainly. One might picture also one body and one soul belonging to two people, each one of whom might say, "that is my body, that is my soul." Of course it would necessitate that these two persons be always engaged on the same work, for they would have but one body. Their thoughts, wishes, and desires must also invariably agree, and as regards knowledge and moral conduct they would be on an equal footing, for they possess but one soul.

What is all this leading up to? We do not hope to explain by means of these figures the mystery of the Blessed Trinity; we are only trying to give you a practical illustration of what the Church teaches. There is but one divine nature and this belongs entirely to the Father, entirely to the Son, and entirely to the Holy Ghost; therefore, the three divine persons are all one and the same God, equal in all their perfections.

And how close, how intimate, how constant and inviolable is the communion of the persons of the Holy Trinity. The tie that binds them together is the very essence of God. Friendship between men depends on the accordance up to a certain point of their views and principles, their plans, inclinations, and habits; but the unison of the three divine persons knows no limit; it is permanent and absolute. O blessed companionship of the persons of God! It is a joy to any of us to have intercourse with one whose ideas and temperament agree with our own, and who has been through the same experiences as ourselves. What must be the blessedness, if I may so express myself, of the eternal and indissoluble communion of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!

The union of the persons of the Blessed Trinity should form for all congregations of people the highest and most beautiful model, and is one worthy of the most careful imitation. It affords an example for the company of heaven—the intercourse of the angels and saints and the blessed in heaven is a reproduction of the unity of the Blessed Trinity. For the whole great human community—if only all intelligent beings in the

world thought as God thinks and were unanimous in desiring the divine Will and acting in every way in accordance with it, what peace and happiness would descend on this earth! It is the ideal of the life of the Church. The Saviour Himself prayed to the Father "That they may be one as we also are one." If this could only come to pass then the days of the early Christians, of whom it was written, "they were one heart and one soul," would come back again. It is an exemplar for all communities throughout the State, a model for the family, a type of Christian marriage.

And now let us look into ourselves, for we, each one of us individually, must try to live as far as we have power in communion with the Blessed Trinity; united to them in thought, by accepting all that God has revealed; in all that we possess, by ardently desiring the life to come; with our will, by determining to be faithful to God's commandments, and, finally, in every action of our lives, by remaining always by grace children of God. Sometimes in this world people a little higher in the social scale than ourselves give us the cold shoulder; often, too, friendships that we prize are broken up either by the flight of time, the conflicting claims of self-interest, or the vacillations of the human heart, or, failing all these, by death. What does it matter? Let us take comfort and cement more strongly our friendship with the persons of the Holy Trinity, entering more and more closely into relation with them, by faith and prayer, hope, love, and good desires. Are they not great enough? Will they not

be faithful? Indeed they will. Let us live in their company here below, and by so doing we shall attain that eternal, indissoluble, and blessed communion with them which is promised us in the life to come. Amen.

## SERMON XXIII

### The Holy Trinity

*"And there are three who give testimony in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost"* (1 *John* v. 7).

We opened our instruction on the Holy Trinity last week by asking three questions:

1. How many persons are there in God? There are three persons in God, really distinct and equal in all things, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. This is the teaching of Scripture, of tradition, and of the Church.

2. Are the three divine persons one and the same God? "The three divine persons are one and the same God, having one and the same divine nature and substance."

3. How are the divine persons distinct from one another? We did not answer this question, but we will now, with the help of the Holy Spirit, attempt to do so. Although these three persons are in their nature and substance indivisible, as persons they are distinct, and from this distinction arises a difference in their works. So we have to consider a two-fold difference.

I. In what way the three divine persons are distinct from one another.

II. The different works attributable to each of them.

I

We will take the first point. How are the three divine persons distinct from one another? They

are distinct from one another in this, that, though in nature and substance the same, they possess this nature and substance differently. The Father possesses it of Himself, the Son derives it from the Father, and the Holy Ghost from the Father and the Son.

It is quite plain that several people may become possessed of an object in different ways. A beautiful painting, for instance, is first the property of the artist whose skillful hand produced it; but he sells it, and it becomes the purchaser's, because he paid for it. This latter again may give it away, and the friend on whom he bestows it receives it as a present. A fourth may come by it in exchange, or by legacy, and so on. But whether it be acquired by purchase, or as a gift, in exchange, or by inheritance, affects only the manner in which it was obtained, and not in any sense the painting itself, which remains the same. We can by means of this very inadequate simile form some idea of the distinction that exists between the persons of the Blessed Trinity. They all three possess from all eternity the same divine nature, with this difference, that the Father did not receive it, but possessed it of Himself; that the Son derived it from the Father; and the Holy Ghost from the Father and the Son; and just because the first of the divine persons received the divine nature from no one, but possessed it of Himself and bestowed it on the Son, He is called the Father; and because the second person received the divine nature from the Father, He is called the Son; and because the third person derived this same divine nature from both the

Father and the Son, He is called the Holy Ghost.

May we go a step further and ask in what way the Son takes His origin from the Father, and the Holy Ghost from the Father and the Son? We may, indeed—but we will not seek to go beyond the indications of Holy Scripture, the tradition of the Church, and the teaching of the Fathers who are unanimous in their doctrine concerning this great mystery. How does the Son proceed from the Father? He was begotten of Him. "Thou art my Son; this day I have begotten Thee." How did this come to pass? It was a spiritual begetting—the Son was begotten of the knowledge of the Father. More than once in Holy Scripture mention is made of the second person of the Godhead as the "Word" and the "Word of God." "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (*John* i. 1). The "Word" alluded to is clearly a person, for in another place we read "the Word was made flesh"; this is the very Word, who, we are told in the same sentence, was "born of the Father," so that it is clearly God the Son who is the "Word." Why is this name given Him? It would appear to indicate the manner of His origin. Words are the outcome, the expression of thoughts. Now in the mind of God a multitude of thoughts do not follow each other, crowding and pressing in rapid and brilliant succession; one single, all-embracing thought, which is not to be distinguished from the divine nature and which is in truth its very essence, pervades His whole being. And how does the Father give utterance to this thought, and how does He clothe

it? In His Word—in one single word, for it is one thought; a word of eternal duration, not, like human words, spoken merely to die away; a word of the Spirit; an essential word as the thought that gave it being is essential; a word containing the whole essence of the Father; a word which He speaks to Himself; a word which is a person —the second Person of the Godhead—God the Son is born of the knowledge of the Father. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God."

Seeing that the mind of God has borne such fruit it seems natural to expect His will and His love to be as productive. The Father and the Son are equal in all things, excepting only that the Father is not the Son, nor the Son the Father. Now there can be no stronger bond of union, no more powerful incentive to love than similarity and equality. The deepest attachments spring up between men of the same age and rank; brought up at the same school, sharers of the same fate and home, and with the same principles and habits. What must the love of the Father be for the Son Who is "the brightness of His glory, and the figure of His substance" (*Heb.* i. 3) and that of the Son for the Father from whom He derives His origin. Their love for each other is equally great and equally eternal and is inseparable from the divine substance. It is the very essence of God. Now just as the thought found expression in the "Word," so this love realizes itself in presents and gifts. They are bestowed by the Father on the Son, and by the Son on the Father, and this manifestation of their mutual love is the

Holy Ghost, the third person of the Blessed Trinity, who is also called the "Gift." A gift given to the Son by the Father and by the Father to the Son; a gift that holds all that the substance of God contains; a gift given and accepted from all eternity, a Gift which is God Himself. The Son is born of the knowledge of the Father, and the Holy Ghost proceeds from the mutual love of the Father and the Son.

II

We now pass on to the second point, which is to distinguish between the different works of the three divine persons. First, we must explain why the Father is to be described as the first person, the Son as the second person, and the Holy Ghost as the third person of the Trinity.

A flame gives light, and from both flame and light arises a certain warmth. Now, certainly as soon as we have a flame, we get the light and the warmth also. Notwithstanding this, if we want to get at the root of things, we must treat the flame as being first, the light second and the warmth third; for the flame causes the light and not the light the flame. It is true that the persons of the Godhead are equal, but if we consider the order in which they proceeded one from the other we must say the Father is the first person, the Son the second person, and the Holy Ghost the third person.

In the same way there is a sequence to be followed in the works of God. First in order comes the work of creation; second, the work of redemption; third, the work of sanctification.

For, what can be more appropriate than to attribute the first work, that of creation, to the Father; the second, or the Redemption, to the Son, and the third work, of sanctification, to the Holy Ghost? Nevertheless, all three works are common to all three persons. One can and must say of each of the three divine persons, and of them all, that They created the world; that it was redeemed, and is sanctified by Them. But, on the other hand, it can only be said of one of Them —and that the second person of the Trinity, the Son of God—that He became man. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us."

But there is a still deeper meaning in this distribution. When we perform any one action we ascribe it to our entire being as a whole; we say, for instance, that we are writing, and that this one or that one is reading or working—but sometimes also we ascribe what we are doing to one particular member or power, and we mention it particularly as being engaged in whatever action we are describing. For instance, we would say the hand writes, the eye reads, the arms work, the mind thinks, and so on. So in each of the works of God we perceive some one or other of His perfections shining forth, and, therefore, we ascribe that work to whichever person of the Trinity this perfection is specially peculiar. In the creation the power of God appears to stand out pre-eminent, and seems, therefore, to appertain in a special way to the Father from whom all things proceed. In the Redemption the wisdom of God is especially revealed and is proper to the Son begotten of the knowledge of the

Father; the work of sanctification is a work of love, and belongs to the Holy Ghost because He is the outcome of the love of the two first persons of the Blessed Trinity.

In this manner the great works of God are apportioned between the three divine persons. We can not better honor the Father than by exalting Him as the author of all things and thanking Him from our hearts for having called us out of nothing to serve Him as intelligent beings. We honor the Son of God by praising Him as the Saviour of the world, who shed His blood to reconcile heaven and earth. We give glory to the Holy Ghost by acknowledging Him as the dispenser of grace, with which He enlightens, sanctifies, and comforts our hearts. Let us beg of Him all the helps necessary for our salvation and endeavor to enter more and more fully into union with the three divine persons. We have all of us special cause for thankfulness to each one of Them, special reasons for praising Them, special favors to beg of Them. We will resolve to say often, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be, world without end." This is the prayer of the Church, and is made in heaven as well as on earth. Amen.

## SERMON XXIV

### The Creation of the World

*"In the beginning God created heaven and earth"* (*Gen.* i. 1).

THE first article of the Creed is: "I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth." We have already fully explained the words: "I believe in God, the Father almighty," and will now pass on to what follows: "Creator of heaven and earth." The consideration of these words will require a long series of instructions dealing with the origin, the object, and government of the whole world; with the angels and the earliest members of the human race. To-day, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we will think over two points:

I. The origin.
II. The purpose of the universe.

I

"Why is God called creator of heaven and earth?"

"God is called creator of heaven and earth, because He created heaven, earth, and all things from nothing, by His word only; that is by a single act of His all-powerful will." The world did not originate itself. This is so undoubted a truth that the mere fact of there being an actual world at all furnishes proof of the existence of God. So if the world did not arise of itself from

what, then, did it come? It was brought forth out of nothing and by a Cause, which is outside, and above, and before it. A Cause competent to bring forth out of nothing. What is this Cause? The almighty power of God. Reason asserts this and Revelation confirms it. The Bible opens with the words: "In the beginning God created heaven and earth." God, and God alone, is the creator of the entire universe. The prophet Isaias asks: "Who hath forwarded the Spirit of the Lord, or who hath been His counselor and hath taught Him?" (*Isaias* xl. 13.) No one; for God alone is almighty and before the creation only He existed. The world was created by a single act of His all-powerful will. He required neither materials from which to make it, nor implements with which to fashion it, nor did it cost Him either labor or fatigue. "For He spoke and they were made, He commanded and they were created" (*Ps.* cxlviii. 5).

To gauge the greatness of the Master let us turn to the magnitude of the work. Consider the dimensions of the universe. The earth had subsisted thousands of years before any man ventured to sail round it or succeeded in exploring it. Look at the sun! If a train running day and night without interval, at the rate of forty miles an hour, were to travel toward it in a direct line, 150 years would pass before even the outer border of it could be reached. Yet the space which the express train would require 150 years to cover can be traversed by a ray of light in eight minutes. Very well. We will imagine a man possessed of the fleetness of a sunbeam. For how

long would he hasten through space before he attained the most remote star, or penetrated to the outer limits of creation? For how long? Most likely for a thousand years or more. Oh, the immensity of the creation of God! How completely it transcends the mind of man or his imagination!

Now glance at the variety and multiplicity of the divine works. How numerous are the stars in heaven! How vast! How brilliant! Yet the spirit creation is more multifarious still, and of its kind more wonderful, more resplendent. How far removed are inanimate objects from those that have life! How great the difference between material and spiritual things! How inconceivably manifold is the diversity of minerals, plants, animals, men, and angels!

And yet what uniformity and relationship runs through all this complexity, making what is lower subject to the higher.

Scripture does not say only that God created the world; it relates that He accomplished it in six days. These need not, of course, necessarily be counted six days as we understand a day. Why not? Primarily because on the first, second, and third day spoken of by Holy Scripture the sun was not yet in the heavens and that from the light of the sun arise day and night; and next because the Hebrew expression which is translated by our word "day" signifies also any space or division or portion of time.

St. Thomas has drawn a very pretty distinction between the creation of the world, the partition of creation, and the embellishing of creation. The

formation of the whole vast mass of the universe was followed on the three first days by a three-fold partitioning: on the first day God divided the light from the darkness; on the second the waters that were under the firmament from the waters that were above the firmament; and on the third the land from the sea. Light—air—earth. On the three succeeding days these regions were beautified by inhabitants: on the fourth day the sun, moon, and stars were added to the domain of light. On the fifth day the air was peopled with birds, the sea with fish; on the sixth the earth was filled with beasts, and, finally, man was called into being.

That God is the creator of the entire universe is a truth which we are called upon to believe firmly and unconditionally. To those who refuse to accept it, this life, the soul, and the world will be enigmas which must remain unanswered, and which, while they will seem incapable of being unraveled, will, nevertheless, be constantly calling for solution. For what can be of more pressing importance than this: to know from whence I come, and whither I am going.

II

As soon as we know from whence the world came it is easy to tell whither it is going, or, in other words, what was the object of creating it. God had a two-fold purpose: 1. His own glory; 2. The good of His creatures.

The principal end to which God made the world is, therefore, His own glory. God is sufficient to Himself, and is in Himself infinitely blessed. He

had no need of the world, but created it of His own free will; and as He has been pleased to do so, it is for us to ask ourselves why and for what purpose it was made. God's infinite holiness exacts that His purpose shall be of the holiest. But what is the holiest purpose? No other than the honor and glory of God. So the world was created primarily to glorify God, and Holy Scripture asserts this most expressly. "The Lord hath made all things for Himself" (*Prov.* xvi. 4) and of man God says, "I have created Him for my glory. I have formed him and made him" (*Isaias* xliii. 7). These words of God's, "I am the Alpha and the Omega," bear the same meaning. In our alphabet A is the first and Z is the last letter. In Greek Alpha is the first letter, but Omega is the last. So what is the meaning conveyed by "I am the Alpha and the Omega"? It signifies: I am the first beginning of the world and of all things, and I am the last end of all creatures.

It is clear that if to give glory to God is the object of all things, it is also the highest end that can possibly be set before us, and it will be realized fully and certainly in every respect. Irrational creation praises and glorifies God by showing forth the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of the creator—and we reasonable creatures are asked to do the same thing, but to do it voluntarily of our own free will.

But whether we do it or not, even should we rebel against God and blaspheme and deny Him, we must perforce, in the end, contribute to God's glory by undergoing His punishments which we shall have deserved.

But God in His creation had a two-fold object in view: his secondary aim is the well-being, the salvation, the happiness of His creatures—rational and irrational. By acknowledging God, by loving and serving Him, His creatures can become more and more united to Him, and enjoy true happiness. They attain and participate in the highest good, which is God Himself.

So let us rest in these two sublime truths, which are so firmly established that on them the order of the whole universe depends. We are of God—creatures of God. We are for God—to give Him glory is our end both in time and eternity. We can not alter this; on the contrary, these two principles should be finger-posts giving the right direction to our whole lives. *Of God.*—This finger points backward; it teaches us humility, showing what we come from and the eternal gratitude we owe to God for having called us out of nothing and placed us in the ranks of His reasonable creatures. *For God.*—This indicates the mission we have received and what our goal should be, namely, to glorify God at all times and in all places by our work and sufferings, in life and in death. We are asked to give of ourselves and with full understanding that which the unreasonable creatures give without will or knowledge. Our praise of God should, so to speak, take the place and fulfill the functions of eyes, tongue, heart, and mind to His irrational creation, exalting Him in its name. The prophet David says: "The heavens show forth the glory of God and the firmament declareth the works of His hands" (*Ps.* xviii. 2). St. John of Avila, when walking

through the fields, was wont to touch the heads of the flowers with his stick and say: "Bright flowers, you must praise God." St. Francis of Assisi called upon the birds and the fishes to join him in giving glory to their maker. The most sublime life of which we have an example in this world, that of Jesus Christ Our Lord, was spent in seeking the glory of God, which He looked upon as His mission here below. Before His passion He said: "I have glorified Thee on earth, I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do" (*John* xvii. 4). The saints of heaven and the angels praise God unceasingly: "Thou art worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power; because Thou hast created all things, and for Thy will they were, and have been created" (*Apoc.* iv. 11). We must take the meaning of these words to heart, and realize that while God is the creator and beginning of all things, He is, at the same time, their object. By seeking His glory we shall find our true end, and in Him we shall be happy forever. Amen.

## SERMON XXV

### The Preservation and Government of the World

*"For in Him were all things created . . . and by Him all things consist"* (*Col.* i. 17).

Our last instruction was concerned with the creation of the world. We saw that God is the cause, the origin of the world, that He is the creator, and that the universe is His work. Out of what did He create it? Out of nothing, by His word only. How did He create it? By a single act of His all-powerful will. In how many days? In six days. Further we considered God's purpose in creation, that He had a two-fold end: 1. His own glory; 2. The good of His creatures.

It now remains for us to see whether God, when He had completed His work, abandoned it to itself, or whether, after the creation, He continued to watch over it. We assert most emphatically that God does preserve and govern the world, and we will proceed to explain how this is manifest. We will consider, therefore, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit:

I. How God preserves the world.
II. In what way God governs the world.

#### I

How does God preserve the world? He preserves it by so ordering that it shall continue in existence in the manner He pleases, and as long as He pleases. Works wrought by human hands

can and often do subsist for a long time after the author has ceased to concern himself about them. A house, a palace, a church, a tower, continue in existence just the same after he who built them has lost all interest in them, and has forgotten all about them; they last for years and hundreds of years after he is dead. But can the world continue in existence without any care on God's part? Most decidedly not. And why not? The reason is not hard to find. An opaque body has of itself no light, but it can be lit up by the reflection of some foreign luminous substance and then it becomes bright. The moon is lit up in this way by the sun. But how long does the brightness of bodies so illumined last? Just so long, and no longer, as the luminous substance sheds its rays on them. If this latter becomes too far removed for its light to reach them, then, naturally, dark objects return to their former state of shadow. What does this serve to illustrate? Just as any dark substance has of itself no light, so must we say of all creatures and of the entire universe that they have of themselves no being, no existence, no life. They are nothing—absolutely nothing—of themselves; the almighty will of God brought them forth, and it is by the action of His influence that they continue to subsist, so that it follows that they will last just so long and no longer than He wills.

This influence exerted by God to maintain His creation calls for further explanation. Wherein does it consist? Is it merely that God does not destroy the world? No, its preservation demands more than that. To keep a lamp burning it is not

sufficient that we merely abstain from extinguishing it; we must also pour in the needed oil, or it will go out of its own accord. In the same way, the mere refraining on the part of the Almighty from annihilating the world would not be adequate to maintain it; He must do more than this. He has, so to speak, to continue the labor of creation by putting forth His will to keep it in being. To silence the tones of a flute mere negative action is sufficient—it is enough for the player to cease to blow; but if he wants the music to continue definite action is necessary on his part; he must breathe air from his lungs into the instrument by means of his mouth. To destroy the world God would need only to withdraw His almighty hand and at the same moment everything would relapse into the chaos from which He drew it. But if it is to stand and endure He must Himself carry it in His arms to protect it from falling into the bottomless pit of nothingness.

The influence which God exerts to preserve the world does not merely consist in His warding off and removing all that may prove a source of harm and hurt to His creatures, threatening their life and existence. You may protect a burning lamp from any gust of wind or from the slightest draught as much as you will; it will none the less die out when the oil which feeds the flame is exhausted. So, also, all creatures and the world they live in may be sheltered from all baneful influences, but this will not sustain them unless the power of God upholds their innermost being.

Think over what this means: God preserves the world! It means not only that He does not

destroy it, or that He keeps off external destructive influences; there is much more in it than that. It means that God is active in His creation, active as regards His creatures, by giving them strength to go on living. The power of His hand upholds all things and prevents their falling back into nothingness. His mighty arm guards and encircles the universe and binds all its forces together so that they shall not fly asunder and vanish like bubbles. This divine preservation is clearly mentioned in Scripture: "And how could anything endure if Thou wouldst not" (*Wis.* xi. 26), says the Book of Wisdom. "All things were created by Him and in Him . . . and by Him all things consist" (*Col.* i. 16, 17). This means that as the world could only have come into being through the power of God, and as all things were created by Him, so it is His power alone that can keep it in existence. "By Him all things consist."

II

God not only maintains the world; He also governs it. Taken together the preservation and the government of the world constitute the Providence of God. We now ask: How does God govern the world? He cares for all things, ordering and directing them to the end for which they were created.

A very simple example will suffice to illustrate this clearly. Observe a carriage drawn by four horses. By whom is it controlled? Every one will say by the coachman; it would be absurd to suggest that either the carriage or the horses con-

trolled themselves. But why are we correct in saying they are controlled by the coachman? For three reasons: 1. Because it is he who knows what their destination is; 2. Because he is acquainted with the road they must travel to reach it, whether it is up or down hill, over smooth or uneven ground, short or long, crooked or straight; also he can judge if the horses are equal to drawing the load and covering the distance in the allotted time; 3. Because he is master of the horses as well as of the carriage. It is he who harnesses and unharnesses the horses, who handles the reins, and can urge them on, or hold them in, or pull them up, and who by the least pressure of the bridle has power to make them turn to the left or to the right. He grooms them and sees that they get fodder and stabling at the right time, that their shoes are in order, and the carriage kept in repair. It seems logical that the coachman, knowing the destination in view and the road to be traversed, and having the charge of the carriage and horses, should also be held responsible for the journey being actually accomplished. Now, may we not say in the true sense of the word that God governs the world? What is wanting to make Him its ruler? Does He not know the end to be reached? Oh, yes; it is He Himself who in His eternal counsels decided what its aim and object should be. God Himself and His glory are its purpose. Or is He ignorant what means to employ, which road to follow, to reach His purpose? He has an intimate knowledge of all His creatures. He knows them through and through, their inmost nature, capacity, and

powers; their inclinations, the temptations into which they fall; the graces they receive; their past, their future; their life and death. He is omniscient. And has He not power over us? Yes, the most complete. His hand is mighty to urge us on; His grace strong to move us; His punishments rigorous to awe us; our understanding, our will, our heart, our life, our death, are in His hands. Who, then, is king and ruler of the world if not God? Who knows its destination and the road that leads to it? And who has constant and complete authority over the whole universe and all creatures?

Who would not fear Thee, Ruler of all nations, King of the universe! Thy dominions are so great, so comprehensive: they embrace all creatures from the greatest to the lowest, from the sparrow on the housetop to each hair of our heads, not one of which can fall to the ground without Thy knowledge and consent. Thou art our immediate ruler. An earthly king can not be everywhere, nor see to all matters himself; he can not give every order with his own lips, nor do everything with his own hands. A great deal must be delegated to officials and subordinates. But God, the ruler of the universe, is omnipresent and guides and directs all things Himself. His is a firm rule which knows neither wavering nor delay, but goes straight to His purpose, from which no opposition on the part of creatures has power to turn Him. O my soul, what a consoling thought, that thou too art a part of this kingdom and one of its subjects, governed by the all-good, the all-knowing, the all-wise God. He has

assigned thee thy place in the world, and He has a special design in regard to thee. He knows thy heart, thy inclinations, thy work, thy joys and sorrows. Submit thyself to Him absolutely and entirely. Be solicitous to serve Him and He in His turn will care for thee, and will lead thee to glorify Him and gain thy eternal salvation. Amen.

## SERMON XXVI

### The Permitting of Evil

*"Suffer both to grow unto the harvest"* (*Matt.* xiii. 30).

We considered last Sunday how God preserves and governs the world He has made, or, in other words, the manner in which His Providence watches over His whole creation, and over each one of us individually. We have unshaken faith in this divine Providence, and our confidence will be further increased if we pass in review the flimsy objections which we so often hear urged against it. What are these objections? Examine your hearts and perhaps you will find that some of them have been stumbling-blocks in your own path, and have given rise to doubts in your own minds regarding the truth of the divine dispensation.

Such objections are founded on the fact that evil exists in the world. Now there are two kinds of evil: moral evil, which is sin, and physical evil, which is made up of the manifold pains and sufferings with which we are afflicted here below; and each of these two classes seems to engender in the minds of men a series of obstacles and difficulties which they place in the way of their belief in a divine Providence. In our instruction to-day we intend to dwell on those difficulties which are deduced from the presence of moral evil or sin, and, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we will consider

I. What is the difficulty to which the presence of sin in the world gives rise?

II. How to solve the difficulty.

I

If God orders and directs all things why does He not prevent evil? How many heads and hearts have pondered this question? To how much torturing doubt has it not given birth? How many mistaken answers have ignorant minds and embittered hearts not furnished to it?

And is it not an actual difficulty? Is sin not a reality? Does it not constantly happen? Will it not always continue to happen? The very first page in the history of the angels tells us of the sin by which they rebelled against God. The story of mankind in like manner begins with the fall of our first parents, and following immediately on this offense against the Almighty comes the story of the crime by which the sacred ties of family were outraged—the fratricide of Cain. Can any one deny that in the whole subsequent history of the human race sin has never at any time or place been absent? On the contrary, we find men who are not only born in sin, but who live and die in it; men for whom law exists only to be set at naught; grace only to be rejected; sacraments to be profaned; who persecute the Church and who look upon their fellow-men as objects of hatred, to be tortured, and oppressed; piety they mock at, God they blaspheme and deny. There can be no doubt that grievous sin of many different kinds is rampant in the world and that it will always continue to be so.

But, is it not also a certain truth that God does not will the commission of sin? We are bound to believe this. How often, how earnestly, how solemnly He has forbidden it! What heavy punishments He attaches to it! As God is holy, sin can not be according to His will.

It is equally beyond doubt that if God wished He could prevent each individual sin. He has it in His power to take men out of life before they become guilty of it, before they are tainted with even the thought of it. He could deprive them of the necessary strength and ability for wrongdoing; He could protect them from temptation and from the occasions of sin; He could pour forth His grace upon them, grace so powerful and efficacious as to enable them to triumph over every inclination and attachment to evil; all this God has undoubtedly the power to do. He holds in His almighty hands not one but a thousand means by which He could prevent sin.

So, on the one hand, we find that sin has been committed and is being constantly committed in the world, that it is in opposition to the divine will of God who has power to prevent it and who yet refuses to interfere. All this is true, while, on the other hand, it is also true that God does guide and govern the world. Are we able to square these statements? Do they not palpably contradict one another? Can a king, in fact, be said to rule when day after day he sees his laws set at defiance, yet takes no step to enforce them, or when he suffers whole armies of rebels to rise up against him, although he could easily suppress such rebellion? It would seem indeed as though

He were not troubling Himself much about His kingdom. How can we say that God is governing the world when day in and day out so many sins are committed which He could, and yet does not take measures to prevent?

II

Now we are face to face with our difficulty, and we find that it is easy to solve, for the simple answer to it is, that God does not will the evil, but permits it. He permits it: 1. Because He has given free will to man. 2. Because out of evil He knows how to bring good.

God is not the author of sin. It is against His will. He forbids it, He punishes it, but He permits it, and this permission is in opposition neither to His holiness nor His providence. He must permit sin because He has endowed man with free will and this entails that man, though not obliged to sin, is free to do so if he chooses. This does not in any way imply that sin is the work of God; on the contrary, it stamps it as the act of man, who incurs God's displeasure for the evil he is guilty of. It is just the fact that we are free agents that gives value to the efforts we make in avoiding sin and fighting temptation, in shunning all that leads to evil and giving ourselves up to the practice of virtue. In a word free will involves that man is master of his fate. "I call heaven and earth to witness this day that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Choose, therefore, life, that both thou and thy seed shall live" (*Deut.* xxx. 19). So spoke Moses to the people of Israel, and God can

say this to each one of us. Is it contrary to the holiness of God to create creatures after this fashion, capable of good or evil? Most certainly it is not. True, He could have bestowed eternal life on man, as an undeserved reward; but He has not elected to do so. He could have accorded him such a measure of grace as would have enabled him to withstand every temptation; but this has not been His intention. He gives him that grace which, while it does not compel resistance, enables him to withstand evil if he desires to do so. God might have formed angels and men differently, have made them sinless and incapable of evil, but He is unfettered and His ways are not our ways. A sculptor in making a statue may select as his material iron, or marble, or stone, or wood, or a more brittle material such as plaster. If he casts it in plaster he is aware that it will break more easily than if it were made of iron, but he does not make it in order that he may see it go to pieces. If a smash occurs, the sculptor can not be blamed for it; it must be laid at the door of those who from carelessness or malice overturned the statue. Certainly when God gave free will to men He was aware that they could and would make use of it for sin; but sin was not according to His will and God is not the author of it.

God has endless reason for allowing sin to take its course in the world unchecked by Him. He knows how to bring good out of evil—good for Himself and good for each one of us. Do not forget that the chief end of all creation is to give glory and honor to the Creator. Is the attainment

of this ultimate end retarded or forwarded by the permitting of evil? Certainly it is forwarded. The patience of God is never more touchingly displayed than when He bears with the sins of men, although He has it in His power to punish the sinner on the instant. His mercy never shines out more clearly than in the forgiving of those who have longest and most grievously offended Him. His goodness has never fuller scope than when He is pouring grace into the most hardened hearts so plenteously that at last they are softened and converted to Him. And should they refuse to respond and turn to Him, what do we see happen then? Where can we find more terrible examples of His justice than in His condemnation to the fire of hell of unrepentant sinners. Sin can, therefore, be made to serve the great end of creation, the glory of God. Why, then, should the Almighty not allow its continuance?

Sin, moreover, can be made to contribute not only to the glory of God, but to the salvation of mankind. To a converted sinner there can be no stronger incentive to redoubled mortification and fervor, ardent charity, and abiding sorrow, than the remembrance of former offenses. Do you think St. Mary Magdalen's life would have been so full of divine love and a desire for penance, or that St. Paul would have developed such zeal for souls, or St. Peter so deep a fountain of tears, if they had never sinned? Such are the blessings bestowed on those who become converted, but God can bring good even out of the persistent wrongdoing of the unrepentant. Who knows how many hearts are expiating sins not their own, how many

souls are atoning for the evil done by others! It is true there are sinners who refuse to amend, but the prayer of the just offered for them in vain, the word of the preacher who strives to soften their hearts, the patience of the confessor who waits for them all to no purpose, are truly works of holiness. There are sinners who wantonly and maliciously injure the lives, the honor, the health, and the property of others, by whom innocence is betrayed and youth corrupted, and who are a living source of scandal everywhere they go. But we find this wickedness counterbalanced by deeds of patience and forgiveness, of charity, fidelity, and endurance, and of genuine and steadfast love of God. Out of the most bitter root God can bring sweetest fruit—His glory and the salvation of His creatures.

As for us, we will never on the plea of the evil in the world doubt the dispensation of Divine Providence. God permits evil from the holiest motives, but He has not given up the government of the world. What did the good-man of the house say to those who told him that his field had been over-sowed with cockle? First he disclaimed the cockle saying: "An enemy hath done this." He could have uprooted the weed as his servants besought him to do, but no; he said: "Suffer both to grow unto the harvest," and why? Because the cockle could not be gathered without injuring the good seed, and the day was yet to come when they should be separated. Do not let us accuse God because He allows sin. How would any one of us have fared if sin were always followed by immediate punishment? Let us make use of our

own falls to do penance for them, and the faults and failings of others to learn patience and brotherly love. Let us pray for the conversion of sinners and be on our guard against scandal. So we shall be doing what in us lies to turn our own sins and the sins of our neighbor to profit, for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Amen.

## SERMON XXVII

### Suffering

*"Whom God loveth He chastiseth"* (*Heb.* xii. 6).

Our last instruction showed us how entirely void is the first of the two objections brought forward to disprove the action of Divine Providence in the world. There is no doubt that men sin often and grievously, but they do it against the will of God. God has power to prevent sin, but it does not enter into His divine plans to do so. He permits it for two reasons: First, on the ground that He has endowed man with free will; and, secondly, because out of evil He knows how to work three-fold good, His own greater glory, the salvation of the sinner himself, and the good of others.

Not only is the moral evil of the world urged against the idea of a divine dispensation, but in the minds of many people the manifold other forms of suffering, with which the life of man here below is beset, form a fresh difficulty. To-day we will try to deal with this second objection and will treat it as we did the first, considering under the guidance of the Holy Spirit:

I. Where the difficulty lies.
II. How to solve it.

I

First, we must clearly state what the difficulty is. It is summed up in the following question:

If God has care of all things in the world, why, then, is there such an amount of suffering? Or, to put it another way, it does not seem possible to reconcile the belief in a watchful Providence guiding all things with the mass of suffering which we see around us.

It is beyond doubt that the world is full of suffering. Holy Scripture testifies to it: "In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread," and mankind groans under this decree of the Almighty. Look how men labor on farms and plantations. Go down into a mine, visit workshops and factories, and you will see that by far the greater part of adult humanity toils till worn out and disabled in the sweat of its face, day by day, from youth to old age. "A heavy yoke weighs on the children of men," says Holy Scripture in another place. But we need not appeal to Holy Scripture; these things are the common experience of each one of us. Some evils, such as heat and cold, old age, disablement, illness, and death are the result of the natural disposition of things; but others take their rise in the malice of men. Many people suffer much at the hands of enemies or unkind neighbors; from bad, degenerate children; evilly disposed superiors, or refractory subordinates. What anguish a husband can cause his wife, or a wife her husband! How we injure ourselves through our own fault, by our ignorance and imprudence, and by the evil passions of our hearts! There is sickness of body and sickness of mind; who can count the maladies and infirmities to which flesh is heir? Walk through the hospitals and you will see these things for yourselves. The

diseases of the mind are also innumerable. A visit to a madhouse will furnish proof of this. Some trials are but transient, others make their pressure felt during an entire lifetime. There are private griefs affecting one or the other of us individually, and public calamities involving villages, towns, and countries. Think of the horrors of war, pestilence, and famine. Sometimes, sorrow can speak and is openly acknowledged, but often too, it is deeply hidden in the heart, locked away from the eyes of men. Oh! if it were possible to break down barriers, to see through the walls of houses, to penetrate the recesses of every heart, what an immensity of suffering, how much secret anguish, we should come face to face with! We are forced to admit that this world is indeed, as it is called, a vale of tears.

Yet it is true that God, if He so willed, could by His almighty power preserve and deliver us from all these bitter evils. What is there to hinder Him from disposing of all things in such a way that everlasting spring should reign upon the earth, yielding so great an abundance as to make labor superfluous; that unbroken health, old age free from infirmity, followed by painless dissolution, should be the common lot, and undisturbed peace with universal joy be established in the world? The golden age so often referred to by the poets was supposed to be a time of just such unclouded happiness. But either it was a remembrance of Paradise, or it is an unreal dream, which will never be verified on this earth. But, nevertheless, the undoubted fact remains that almighty God has power to make it true.

And why does He not act in so fatherly a manner? How can His loving providence tolerate so much wrong and not try to put it right, look on such heavy suffering and not seek to alleviate it, contemplate such enduring sorrow without stretching out His hand to cut it short? A loving Providence grows less and less evident to our eyes when we consider that for many, perhaps for most of us, suffering is an occasion of discontent and despondency, causing murmurs against God and doubt even of His goodness, driving some even to despair and self-destruction. If there must be suffering in the world why at least is it not distributed so that each one should get his portion of the joy as well as of the sorrow of life? One would expect a kind father to deal out good and evil equally among his children. Here, then, is our difficulty. The suffering which plays so large a part in the world seems to stand out in the sharpest contradiction to the dispensation of a divine and a fatherly Providence.

II

All that we have said can be resolved into one great question: "If God has care of everything, why is there so much suffering?" Now listen to the simple answer, which gives the whole solution of our difficulty. Suffering is in the world: 1. In order to incline the sinner to turn to God that he be not lost for all eternity; 2. That the good may become richer in merits and have a greater reward hereafter in heaven.

The difficulty is solved chiefly by pointing to another life which is to follow our probation in

this world. If there were no life beyond, certainly we should have a right to demand of God's goodness and justice that all men, or at least those who live according to His commands, should enjoy happiness here below. Do those who try to rob the people of their belief in eternity ever consider that they are placing a most dangerous weapon in the hands of men who with envious hearts, audacious tongues, and perhaps even with the might of a strong arm, clamor for the possessions, happiness, and pleasures of this earth? If the toilers of the world have no belief in eternity must they not look with gnashing of teeth at the minute portion of happiness compared with the burden of labor and suffering which falls to their lot? But the man of faith, however poor he be, is consoled by his trust in the divine Father who knows what he suffers, whose heaven is wide enough to take him in, and whose eternity is long enough to compensate him fully for all earthly sorrows. And he knows, too, why God allows him to suffer so much.

Why does He allow it? Because suffering is beneficial to the sinner, by inclining him to turn to God so that he be not lost forever. Suffering is in part a punishment for sin and, as such, deals with us more indulgently and leniently than will the justice of the world to come, as St. Augustine knew when he prayed to God: "Here cut, here burn, but spare me in eternity." He recognized the blessing of being allowed to atone here on earth, instead of waiting for eternity. Suffering is also the great means of salvation by which occasions of sin are removed and our eyes are

opened to the nothingness of all that is earthly. It subdues the desires of the flesh, breaks down the pride of life, softens the heart, and prepares it for sorrow and penance. We have abundant proofs of this. When did Adam repent of his disobedience? When, exiled from Paradise, he labored the earth in the sweat of his brow. When was Pharaoh induced to allow his Israelites to leave Egypt? When, plague-stricken, he began at last to fear the hand of God. In the same way David repented of his pride when he saw his people devoured by pestilence. Naaman, when afflicted with leprosy, sought out the prophets; and the people of Israel returned contrite to the service of the true God when, defeated and imprisoned, they found themselves scattered and in captivity. Every one who has the care of souls, indeed almost every Christian, can, from his own personal experience, point to sinners who, in poverty, captivity, misfortune, sickness, and death, became converted to God and repented of the sins of their days of opulence, freedom, health, and prosperity. The example which our Saviour Himself gave us of a repentant sinner was that of the prodigal son who was moved to be converted only when he had been reduced to a state of absolute destitution.

So suffering must be looked upon by sinners as a well-deserved punishment and an efficacious means of salvation. But, in this world, we often find that good people suffer more than bad. And yet for them also sorrow is a blessing. Is it not a protection against sin, a means of practising patience and fidelity, and of giving proof of their

love of God? Is it not the way to earn a richer reward in heaven? Surely this alone would be sufficient to justify the Providence of God in allowing the just to be afflicted. No one will be found willing, for the wage of a few pence, to undertake hard and painful labor under a burning sun, requiring much exertion and entailing great privations. But, if the pay is at the rate of three, six, or fifteen dollars a day, many applicants will be forthcoming who will consider themselves lucky to be engaged for such work, because the remuneration is so good. Now do you understand why God chastises those whom He loves so much? He wants to enable them to earn a very great reward. What did He give St. Peter? Suffering. St. Paul? Labor upon labor, sorrow upon sorrow. His holy Mother? Grief deeper than the sea. Do you see now why so many saints hoped and prayed that suffering might be their portion? St. John of the Cross cried: "O Lord, to suffer and to be despised for Thee!" They knew that the sufferings of time are short and light, but the crown eternal. The surest way to heaven is not by the grandest words, not by the greatest deeds, not even by the miracles and graces, but by suffering borne with enduring patience and resignation for the love of God.

Let us cease to accuse and complain of the Providence of God. He is more far-seeing than we, and knows what is best for us. Suffering is a gift from His kind and merciful hand. The sorrows of others should be to us as so many opportunities of practising works of mercy. Our own sorrows we must accept in a spirit of atonement,

regarding them as calls to repentance, opportunities of merit, mercies vouchsafed to us by almighty God. We will pray that He may give us grace to bear every sorrow He sends with patience, resignation, and even joy; making known to us, even in this world, the consolations of suffering, and giving us hereafter the reward of eternal life. Amen.

# SERMON XVIII

## The Angels

*"Who makest Thy angels spirits"* (*Ps.* ciii. 4).

In our instructions on the creation of the world, and the manner in which it is preserved and governed by Divine Providence, we have been following the method outlined by the catechism. It still remains for us to consider more closely some of God's most privileged creatures, beginning with those who stand pre-eminent among them, namely, the angels. With the help of the Holy Ghost we propose to-day to think over three points:

I. The origin of the angels.
II. Their state.
III. Their fall.

I

Over and above this visible world which we see around us God has created an invisible world which is made up of those countless spirits whom we call angels. The terrestrial globe on which we live is described as the visible world because we can see it with our bodily eyes; we can see it because it is made up of material parts, because it is, in fact, matter. The terrestrial world, the visible world, the material world, these are interchangeable terms. And what a glorious world it is; so radiant with light and brightness! What multitudes of different minerals, plants, and ani-

mals it contains, what thousands of families, orders, and species of material things of every description! How numerous are the steps to be counted in the scale of gradations, beginning from the lifeless stone lying inanimate upon the road, up to the marvelous structure of the human body, which, dust though it be, remains to this day a perpetual source of admiration and wonder. But, this visible world, wonderful as it is, has not exhausted God's creative power. He has made another, a second, an invisible world, which comprises not material bodies, but spirits.

If we could only see this other, this invisible world, in the same way in which we look upon the material things around us, what would meet our eyes? A universe probably larger and more extensive than that we live in; more luminous, more varied, adorned with a greater multitude of creatures. For the spirits of the other world are entirely free from everything material; they are beings whose entire existence is made up of thought and will, and who are in their whole nature the image of God. They are called "angels," from the Greek word *angelos,* which means messenger, because they are God's messengers, sent by Him to make known His will to mankind. Their number is so great that the angels themselves can not count it, it can not be gauged, and is known only to their Maker Himself. "Thousands of thousands ministered to Him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before Him" (*Dan.* vii. 10). Some are more perfect than others. They are described by Holy Scripture as

God's legions of war, His hosts; and as a great army is broken up into squadrons and regiments so Holy Scripture divides the angels into nine choirs. Beginning with the highest, we count: Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones, Dominations, Principalities, Powers, Virtues, Archangels, Angels. These different designations are not too easy to explain. The names of the three first choirs have regard to the close relation in which they stand to the Almighty: the Seraphim consumed with burning love of God; the Cherubim exalted by wonderful knowledge of God; the Thrones immediately surrounding the throne of God. The three next choirs take their name from the peculiar majesty, dignity, and strength which is proper to themselves; while the names of the three lowest choirs contain a reference to their relations toward other beings that are subordinate to them.

It must not be forgotten that the spirit world was created by God out of nothing, just as was the material world; and though by their nature and knowledge they are as high above us as the sun is above the earth, the angels must, nevertheless, in common with us, bow down before God and say: "We also are nothing, absolutely and entirely nothing, less than the dust of earth. All that we are, all that we have, is the pure and undeserved gift of God." So we must unite ourselves to them and they must join with us in saying: "Thou art worthy, O God our Lord, to receive glory and honor and power, because Thou hast created all things, and for Thy will they were and have been created" (*Apoc.* iv. 11).

II

Now that we know the origin of the angels, we naturally would like to inquire in what state God created them? The catechism asks: "Were the angels, as God created them, good and happy?" And the answer is: "The angels, as God created them, were good and happy." Moreover, they had a richly gifted nature and were endowed with sanctifying grace. The gifts of knowledge and learning lavished on them far excelled in depth and breadth, in subtlety and clearness the knowledge of even the most profound among men. What were the words in which the woman of Thecua praised the wisdom of King David: "Thou, Lord, my king, art wise according to the wisdom of an angel of God" (2 *Kings* xiv. 20). And how did our Saviour express Himself when He wished to impress on us that the coming of the last day would not be foreseen even by the most penetrating minds? He said that it would remain hidden even from the angels of heaven. They were endowed with the precious gift of free will, unencumbered with any burden of fleshly infirmity, and illumined by the light of a great knowledge which quickened and defined its workings, keeping it unmoved in its resolves. A feather thrown into the air by a little child, even with great exertion and effort, will not fly high, or straight, but will flutter about for a few moments, and then drop powerless to the ground. The resistance of the air prevents it rising. But a very heavy missile shot out of a cannon will fly with extraordinary velocity for miles, straight in the direction of the object aimed at, and is capable

of piercing even the steel armor of an enemy's ships. Our purposes and resolutions, even at the best, are weak. They take shape slowly, endure often but a short time, and can be entirely routed by the smallest opposition. But the will of an angel is quick, resolute, steadfast, decided; and without looking to the right or to the left goes straight to the goal.

They were furnished with immense strength. The angels of God slew in one night the army of the Assyrians, which numbered 185,000 men.

Splendid as were their natural gifts God endowed them yet more richly in the supernatural order, giving them knowledge of a very special kind and a very extraordinary measure of sanctifying grace. Clearly, the larger the vessel the more it is capable of containing; what a measure of grace were the angels, then, fit to receive, who were made so glorious, so like to God.

They were happy, not only with the happiness which comes from the vision of God, but in the same way that our first parents were happy in Paradise—happiness was their state. They had the joy of innocence; they were by grace children of God; they had the hope of greater things to come. They were good and glorious, with a richly gifted nature, and endowed with sanctifying grace.

III

Now, having considered their origin and state, we must turn to contemplate the downfall of so many among the angels. The catechism asks: "Did all the angels remain good and happy?"

"All the angels did not remain good and happy; many of them sinned and were cast into hell, and these are called devils or bad angels."

We learn from Holy Scripture and from the teaching of the Church that there is no doubt many of the angels sinned grievously. What was the nature of their sin? That it was by pride we know with certainty, but in what form has not been made clear. I will merely indicate the ways in which various learned theologians have attempted to explain the pride of the fallen angels. Some suppose that they demanded from the lower spirits a reverence to which they had no right; some, that they refused to render to God the thanks due to Him for their magnificent gifts, or that they wished to attain a higher state than that to which God destined them; others, that they had endeavored to reach the goal appointed for them by their own exertions, without His help; or that they refused to adore the coming Saviour, the Son of God, on account of His becoming man. They may or may not have done one or all of these things, but certain it is that they rebelled in some way against the decrees of God, and wanted, if not to be equal, at least to be independent of Him. This fearful sin was all the greater because they owed so much to their Creator, and because they knew so clearly the full import of what they were doing; they acted with so much obstinacy and deliberateness that a change of heart, humanly speaking, was impossible. How many fell we do not know. The Apocalypse of St. John relates how the seven-headed dragon when cast out of heaven drew down in his fall with his tail the

third part of all the stars (*Apoc.* xii.). It is thought by some that the dragon signifies Lucifer, the leader of the bad angels, the first rebel against God's law, the revolutionary of heaven. The stars drawn after him by his tail are supposed to be the angels who followed his example. So, according to this theory, one-third of the angels must have fallen. It is a well-thought-out idea and may be right, but we have no proof of it. We know only that very many fell away, but what the number was we have no means of telling.

The sin was followed by immediate punishment. All the rebels were cast into hell. No respite was allowed, no time for grace, for repentance or conversion. St. Peter says: "God spared not the angels that sinned, but delivered them drawn down by infernal ropes to the lower hell, unto torments to be reserved unto judgment" (2 *Peter* ii. 4). Their fate was decided instantaneously; and the same moment that sealed their doom, determined also the lot of the good angels who had refused to be led away. They had endured the test, and were admitted without delay to the beatific vision of God. How just art Thou, O God, and in Thy holiness how Thou dost hate sin. So much dost Thou hate it that the angels, the master-works of Thy hands, Thy favorites, were for the first offense, one sin of thought, turned away from the door of heaven and cast every one without exception into the bottomless pit, to be punished by the fire of hell.

O Lord, how we ought to fear Thee! How will it go with us if Thou cut short the time for repentance with us, who sin and sin repeatedly, not

only in thought but in deed, and who even after obtaining forgiveness return to our old sin! Who would not fear Thee!

We have the stronger reason to dread sin because it is so near to us. The greatest among the angels, despite their gifts, their many graces, their intelligence, were not safe, but fell into evil of their own free will. How carefully must we be on our guard against it, we who are born in sin, who carry the tendency to it within us, who are moved to it by our flesh, who are surrounded by temptations, opportunities, and examples of it on every side, who have already fallen and experienced human weakness and frailty. If the strongest angels did not resist, how must we tremble who are but dust and ashes! Nothing remains for us but to desire from our heart a lively horror of sin, and, remembering the punishment due to it, to "work out our salvation in fear and trembling." Amen.

## SERMON XXIX

### Our Angel Guardian

*"He has given His angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways"* (*Ps.* xc. 11).

All that we have so far considered in connection with the angels is concerned with their relation to God. What this is can be summed up in a few words: The angels were created by God and by Him endowed with gifts both of a natural and a supernatural order. Some of them fell away from their Creator, but others remained faithful. Now it is also necessary that we should have some idea of their relation to ourselves, and, as some of these spirits are good and blessed, while others are evil and cast-away, it follows that we must look at this question under a double aspect. With the help of the Holy Ghost we will, therefore, attempt to consider:

I. The disposition of the good angels toward us.
II. The disposition of the bad angels toward us.

I

First, how are the good angels disposed toward us? The good angels love us, and protect us, soul and body, pray for us, and inspire us to good.

They love us with a pure, holy, and disinterested love, and they show this love by words, in praying for us and with us, and by deeds in protecting us from thousands of physical dangers which threaten our health and our life. We have

numerous examples in Holy Scripture and in history, both sacred and profane, of their loving care. Tobias was accompanied by the angel Raphael; an angel protected Judith; St. Peter was delivered from prison by an angel. But what is of much more importance for us even than this, is the assistance they give to the souls of men.

We are taught expressly by Holy Scripture and by the Church that certain spirits are appointed to watch over us, and to such we give the name of guardian angels. Our Saviour, when speaking of children, said: "Their angels see always the face of My Father who is in heaven" (*Matt.* xviii. 10). *Their* angels. So, even as children, we are provided with a pure spirit to guard and protect us. Moreover, St. Paul says of the angels: "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent to minister for them who shall receive the inheritance of salvation?" (*Heb.* i. 14). This would appear to mean that all are accompanied on their earthly pilgrimage by one of these beneficent spirits. In the Old Testament we read of the angel of the Persians, of the Greeks, of the Jews; so we may take it that nations also have guardian angels to protect them. We may well believe that the Church, too, is guarded in a special way by an angel, that prince of heaven, the archangel Michael, and what is there to prevent us from thinking further that particular communities and bodies of people have likewise special ministering spirits appointed to watch over them?

What motive can the angels have in devoting themselves in this way to our protection? First, God has placed us under their care—"He has

given His angels charge over thee''—and they are ever prompt and zealous in performing the duties laid on them by their divine master. But they do it also out of love for us. We are their relations, so to speak, connected with them, not by the flesh, but through the spirit, for we, too, are spiritual beings. Like them we are children of God and future citizens of heaven. Then, they are driven to our assistance also out of feelings of abhorrence for the evil spirits. They see how sorely men are tried by these corruptors, who are so well versed in the arts of temptation, so full of envy and malice that their efforts are frequently crowned with success and always fraught with danger. Could the angels possibly look on unmoved at such a spectacle? Even if obedience to God's commands did not actuate them, or if love of humanity did not spur them on, detestation of the old enemy would urge them to come forward on the side of mankind. These are three potent springs of action: obedience to God, love for us, and hatred of the evil spirits, which supply strong motives to the angels for condescending to be our guardians and protectors.

At the same time, let no one think that it is in any sense a degradation for the sublime, pure, and holy beings to devote themselves to the service of unholy and sinful creatures like ourselves, who at the best are on a far lower plane than they. ''What,'' you may exclaim, ''the higher to serve the lower!'' Yet, surely, you must have often noticed how in a home the mother sometimes will place the baby of the family who, perhaps, can not yet walk or even stand alone, under the

special charge of the older brothers and sisters who will then try to out-do each other in petting and tending such a precious treasure. We see the same thing in the larger community of the State. Men who are specially gifted with insight and knowledge, who have wide experience, and strong powers of influencing others, frequently devote their entire lives to directing, guiding, controlling, and protecting their weaker brethren. No one, I think, would say that such an occupation was degrading. Then why should there be a different order of things in the great community of God's creatures? The angels and the elect in paradise form with us, who though still pilgrims of earth are bound for heaven, one great community which makes up the house of God, His family, His kingdom. The great Father of us all places us poor ignorant and inexperienced creatures under the charge of the guardian angels, and by helping us they are serving God and His kingdom, and are the instruments of His divine Providence. This is not a humiliation, but a high honor.

Such being the dispositions of the angels in our regard, we have next to ask ourselves what should be our attitude toward them. St. Bernard expresses it shortly and pithily in these words: "We must respect their presence, be grateful for their good will, and trust in their protection." *Respect their presence.* The company of a pure and heavenly spirit, one who looks continually on the face of God, should indeed tend to purify our thoughts, bridle our tongues, and give to all our dealings the impress of modesty and decency.

Even the effect produced by the appearance of a respected and high-principled man in any rather loose company is remarkable; the indelicate conversation, the dissolute song, the free behavior will often stop short on the instant. *We must be grateful for their good will, their solicitude.* We thank any one of whom we even inquire our way in the street. How much more do we owe thanks to our guardian angel who shows us our way on the road of life, following us into the most dangerous places, staying by us in our hour of sorrow, leading us into the confessional, to holy communion, supporting us in sickness and death, and up to the very judgment-seat of God. Let us at least breathe a word of thanks morning and evening. *We must trust to His protection.* The thought that we are provided with a protector so holy, so faithful, so powerful, should give us confidence that we shall be able safely to reach our journey's end, and should induce us in temptation and difficulty to turn trustingly to our guardian angel. Would a traveler not apply readily and naturally for help to the friend and fellow-passenger nearest to him? Therefore, respect the presence of your angel guardian; be grateful for his good will, trust to his protection.

II

We will now inquire into the feelings entertained toward us by the evil spirits. Their whole attitude may be expressed in three words: Hatred, envy, and persecution.

The evil spirits hate God with an undying hatred, and because they hate Him they also hate us, the work of His hands, with the graces and

gifts which He gives us, and all that comes from Him, and the Church which is His kingdom.

This bitter hatred is mingled with envy. The evil spirits envy us. Envy is the grief felt at the happiness of another, and they have indeed strong grounds for envy! The good of all goods, happiness in God, is lost to them; what they have foregone is now the portion of men, who will fill the places in heaven which the bad angels have left empty. The greater the desired good, the more torturing the envy; the more glorious the spirit, the lower in comparison was man in his origin; heaven, once so near them, is now so far out of their reach; while to man, from whom it was once so far, it is now, through God's grace, brought so near.

Hating and envying us as they do, it is to be expected that the evil spirits will harm us as much as they can: "And your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion goeth about seeking whom he may devour" (1 *Peter* v. 8). God permits us to be tried in this way to test our allegiance, and for the ultimate confusion of the evil one.

There is only one way to meet this envious and malicious adversary and that is by incessant watchfulness. "Be sober and watch," says St. Peter (1 *Peter* v. 8). Pray especially to the guardian angels. Their love is more potent than the hatred of the demons; they make constant intercession for us; they are well acquainted with every wile of the evil one; they will help us to gain the mastery, fighting with us and for us. Let us rely on our good angels, and, unhurt by the assaults of the devil, press forward on the road to eternal life. Amen.

## SERMON XXX

### The Creation of Adam

*"And the Lord God formed man of the slime of the earth, and breathed into his face the breath of life"* (*Gen.* ii. 7).

HAVING considered those heavenly spirits, the angels, in relation to God as well as in relation to ourselves, we must now turn to the inhabitants of earth, men. You may ask, Why select men? There are plenty of other creatures in the world quite as worthy of consideration. There are many different kinds of animals, both in the sea, on dry land, and in the air, and a multitude of plants, from the cedar of Lebanon down to the hyssop that grows out of the wall. Most certainly all these creatures are highly interesting. But, we want to give our attention to the study of man, just for the reason that we ourselves are men. It matters more that each one of us should be thoroughly at home in his own house than that he should make himself familiar with the way about any large town situated at a distance. It is of greater importance to know ourselves than to be acquainted with all the rest of God's works. Moreover, we shall come to see that man is God's noblest and most important creation on earth. We will to-day consider his origin, and will contemplate the first man, Adam, in order that we may understand:

I. The nature of man.

II. His dignity.

I

Holy Scripture relates the creation of man briefly in the following words: "And the Lord God formed man of the slime of the earth; and breathed into his face the breath of life." These words show clearly that man is a creature made by the hand of God, and, more than this, that the nature of the first man consisted of two component parts: the body, which God formed of the slime of the earth, which is the material element; and the breath of life, breathed into the body by God, the immortal soul, which is the spiritual element. Why does Holy Scripture say, "He breathed"? Has God a mouth like ours through which to breathe? Certainly not. The term is made use of in order to convey to our minds the nature of the spiritual element in man. "He breathed." The slime of the earth existed before the body was formed of it, but before God breathed the soul did not exist. "He breathed." Breath is invisible; the soul is invisible and purely spiritual. "He breathed." It was God's own breath; so the soul is absolutely and entirely of God and is not, like the body, formed of the earth. God breathed into it the breath of life, the breath of the living God, which caused the inanimate body to live. It is from the soul that the body derives its life and vitality.

Man is made up of body and soul, of a mortal body and an immortal soul, of a material body and a spiritual soul; by his body he is related to the animals and to material things, but by his soul he partakes of the nature of the angels. He is, as it were, the central point of creation in which

matter and spirit meet and are united—the rivet which fastens together the material and the spiritual world.

II

The nature of man, consisting as it does of a body and a soul, bears witness to the dignity that is his, as the foremost creature of earth and king of the world. If you doubt this remember the words spoken by God before and after He created man. What did He say before He created him: "Let us make man to our own image and likeness" (*Gen.* i. 26)? Not, mark you, to the image of the angels, or of anything in heaven, much less to that of the beasts, but to the image of God. "And God created man to His own image, to the image of God He created him" (*Gen.* i. 27). Holy Scripture emphasizes this twice over. And what were God's words after the creation of man: "Fill the earth and subdue it, and rule over the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the air, and all living creatures that move upon the earth" (*Gen.* i. 28). Man, therefore, is monarch of all earthly creatures, not by election or by birth, but created to be king over the whole earth and installed as such by God Himself. If the choice of a ruler devolved upon us we should certainly select him whom we thought to be the wisest, the strongest, the most conscientious; will not God, then, have exalted to the position of king of the earth the wisest, the strongest, the most noble of His creatures? Surely! "Thou hast made him a little lesser than the angels" (*Ps.* viii. 6), but far above all earthly creatures has God raised mankind.

But even were all we have been saying not true, and no word of it to be found in Holy Scripture, it must still be admitted that man is king of the earth, and that by reason of his immortal soul he stands high above all the other inhabitants of the world. It ought to be superfluous amongst Christians to accentuate and insist on the immortality of the soul, and I am quite sure that of all who are listening to me not one has any doubts or misgivings on that all-important point. But we go out into the world and mix with all kinds of people, and we hear theories and principles enunciated calling in question truths that for hundreds of years have been regarded as certain and unalterable. Man, we are told, has no soul, least of all one that is immortal; he is an animal, a cleverer, shrewder, more perfect animal, more developed than the other animals, but still an animal, and the descendant of animals; he lives for a time to eat and drink, and then he dies, and when he is dead, as in the case of animals, all is over. Can this be so? Ask yourselves, can this be so? No, a hundred times no! It is diametrically opposed to Holy Scripture; it is in direct contradiction to the teaching of the Church; it upsets the whole basis on which man's self-respect rests. No; from whatever point of view we look at these repulsive doctrines which degrade mankind it is apparent that they can be refuted. Look into the face of a man. It bears engraven upon it the stamp of the spirit; as the poet says: "His eyes are raised to the stars." His glance carries a long way, but the eyes of his soul reach further still and penetrate

to the very origin and as far as the last end of things. No mere animal has a gaze so searching and profound. Look into the heart of man; what do you see there? An incessant yearning for happiness—perfect happiness. What can he find here on earth to satisfy this yearning? Is this world capable of satisfying it? No, a thousand times no! To fill this longing the soul has need of a life deeper and fuller than the miserable space of time allotted to us here below. If we examine more closely still into the character of man we find above all a natural instinct of justice which demands that evil shall be punished and good prevail. Is this what happens in this world? Alas, too often it is vice that gets the reward, while virtue is trodden under foot. In another life our sense of justice will be upheld. A man is able to give utterance to words, sentences, phrases—evidences of spirituality. Have animals been ever known to speak? Every word spoken, written, printed, or read is a further proof that man is a spiritual being, standing far above all that is animal. The human race has done great work. It has founded States and cities, developed and cultivated art and science, promoted the exercise of religion; even the virtues and vices characteristic of mankind testify by their very existence to the heavenly spark, the immortal soul within, which makes them possible. Have animals founded States? Do they make discoveries? What has been their progress, in so many thousands of years? The spider spins his web in the same way that he did 6,000 years ago; the bee constructs his hive just as did the first

bee that ever lived; they follow the instinct implanted in them by God. It is strange to hear mankind pluming himself one moment on the wonderful progress he has made in the course of centuries, while the next he disclaims to be more than an animal, the dust of the earth. Consider man's relations with the animals. They are often fleeter and much stronger than he, and many are quite savage; yet he is able to catch them as they fly in the air, out of the water, in the woods. He is able to restrain with studied dexterity the most powerful, to tame the wildest, bend them to his will, and oblige them to serve him. He is paramount on earth. Look where you will, everything tells the same tale, man's face, his heart, his feelings, his words, his works, his attitude to the other creatures on earth. Man is a spiritual being. His soul will live eternally.

Let us endeavor to imagine ourselves present at the moment when, as almighty God breathed into his face, Adam's eyes opening for the first time looked on the earth, and saw the firmament above him, the wide world, and all God's works around him. The praise of God burst from his lips: "How great art Thou, O Lord." His first heart-beat was a throb of thankfulness to his Maker, of love from the creature to the Creator. Adam's first impulse can have been no other than to praise and thank God. What was natural to Adam is for us a duty. To praise, love, and thank God is our mission; if we faithfully fulfill it a life of eternal happiness will be our portion in the world to come. Amen.

## SERMON XXXI

### The Creation of Eve

*"And the Lord built the rib, which He had taken from Adam into a woman"* (*Gen.* ii. 22).

Having last Sunday considered the creation of the first man, Adam, the subject of our instruction to-day will be that of Eve, the first woman, and we will divide our explanation into three points:

I. The creation of Eve.
II. The union of Adam and Eve.
III. The descent of the whole human race from Adam and Eve.

I

Holy Scripture describes the creation of Eve in the following words: "And the Lord God built the rib, which He took from Adam into a woman, and brought her to Adam" (*Gen.* ii. 22).

One might ask why Eve's body was not formed, like Adam's, out of the slime of the earth. The answer is that the whole human race was to have one single progenitor, and it was necessary on this account that Eve should also in some way descend from him, so she was built, that is formed, of one of his ribs. Therefore, Eve is bodily descended from Adam.

Further, we might ask, why was Eve formed of one of Adam's ribs? St. Thomas tells us Eve was not taken from the head of Adam because

woman is not intended to be the head, or, in other words, is not made to be the ruler of man. Neither was she made from his feet, because she is not the slave of man, to be despised and trodden under foot. But, why should she have been formed of his rib? This holy theologian explains it by saying that it betokens the partnership which is meant to exist between man and woman; woman is to stand by man's side as his helpmate in life, aiding him in his work, consoling him in sorrow, sharing his happiness, taking her place as the nearest and dearest to his heart. This high ideal of woman's relation to man could not have been expresssed in a manner more simple, more clear, more ingenious.

And for what reason was it that the rib was taken out of Adam's side during his sleep? The Doctors of the Church see a very mystical purpose in this. Adam, the father of the whole human race, is a figure of Christ, the new Adam, the second and supernatural father of humanity. Adam's sleep is a type of the sleep of death on the cross from which our Saviour was awakened by His glorious resurrection. During Adam's sleep Eve, his bride, was formed; and a similar thing came to pass while our Saviour slept in death. For as He hung dead upon the cross His side was pierced and blood and water flowed therefrom. The water is an image of holy baptism and the blood is emblematic of the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. By these two sacraments the bride of Christ, Holy Church, was founded, built and perfected; and, as the bride of Adam was made from his side while he slept, so

out of the side of the unconscious body of Christ came forth His bride, the Church.

This, then, is the manner of the creation of the first members of the human race: the man was made out of the slime of the earth, the woman from the rib of the man. God Himself who created him gave the name of Adam, which means "man of earth," to the first man. The woman was, by Adam, named Eve, signifying "mother of the living." It can be said that the name "Adam" looks backward to the past, to the original slime of the earth, and is intended as a humiliation. The name "Eve," on the other hand, looks forward and points to what she shall be in the future—the mother of living children, who, in accordance with the designs of God, shall live not only in time, but for all eternity—a constant reminder of the high destiny and vocation of woman.

II

We now pass on to the second point of our meditation, the union of Adam and Eve.

When God had created Eve he brought her to Adam. For what purpose? To be his wife. Mark well that God had created but one man and one woman and that He Himself brought the woman to the man. It was God Himself who instituted marriage; He ordained it in Paradise. These two beings were created one for the other and were brought together by the Creator Himself. And what conditions did God lay down for marriage? That it shall be between one man and one woman. This is no interpretation of my own making; our Saviour Himself interpreted it in this

way and His explanation can not mislead us. When questioned as to the divorce customary with the Jews, He replied that on account of the hardness of their hearts divorce was allowed them by the law of Moses, but that it was not so in the beginning (*Matt.* xix. 8). Such was not the primary ordinance of marriage and the beginning alluded to by our Saviour is the first marriage in Paradise. Observe, then, how ancient is the unity of marriage. It is as old as the human race. See its holiness. It was ordained by God Himself. Can we, then, wonder if, despite the passions of men, and regardless of all human laws or regulations of State, the Church, with inexorable severity, insists on the unity of the marriage tie?

III

Adam and Eve, the first man and the first woman, were joined by God Himself in wedlock; they were the first bride and bridegroom and their union was decreed, ratified, and consecrated by God Himself. They were the first married pair on earth.

Let us then consider in conclusion that as of all mankind these two only were created directly and immediately by God Himself, so it follows that all other men are descended from them, and that they are the parents of the whole human race. This is the teaching of Holy Scripture: "Wherefore as by one man sin entered into this world, and by sin death: and so death passed upon all men, in whom all have sinned" (*Rom.* v. 12). Because we are all children of Adam we are all sinners and must all die. Or, as we find it

stated more plainly still: "God hath made of one all mankind to dwell upon the whole face of the earth" (*Acts* xvii. 26).

This teaching is frequently attacked. It is said to be impossible that all mankind can be descended from the same parents when we consider how men differ in build and size, and as to the color of their hair and skin which vary from pure white to the deepest black; their various organisms are on different lines, as are also their mental and moral tendencies and capabilities. The differences are obvious, but do not in the least make the universal descent from Adam and Eve less likely. The same parents often have children who are totally unlike each other. Moreover, in different parts of the world such things as work, mode of life, food, housing, climate, degrees of heat and cold vary very much indeed. After 6000 years would all these differences not be sufficient to account for our now dividing men into white and colored races? In Africa the descendants of European settlers 300 years back are now as dark as the original natives of the country.

It is further contested that Africa and America have been inhabited from prehistoric times, and that it would have been impossible for the descendants of Adam and Eve to have made their way there. But there is nothing impossible about it. Europe, Asia, and Africa were formerly all connected at some one point, so that it was quite possible to travel from one continent to the other on dry land. But what about America? There are signs of America's having been at some

primeval epoch joined to Asia. Moreover, these two worlds are in one place only about thirteen hours apart, and the sea which divides them becomes frozen every winter into a firm and fairly passable road. Why should this not have been a means of access from one continent to another? A chain of islands leads from Asia to Australia, and so close do these islands lie together that the inhabitants can pass from one to the other quite easily by water. Moreover, who can assert, or who will undertake to prove, that land and water bore at all times the same proportion and stood in the same relation to one another that they do now? No one is in a position to do this. It is quite possible that countries and continents which are now entirely cut off may formerly have been connected, and who knows how far apart those places which are in our day connected may have been at some early period of the earth's history.

It is certain, then, that all men are children of Adam, and that they make up together one race, one family, all closely related, all brothers and sisters. This supplies a strong motive for charity and brotherly love. What would Adam, if he were still on earth, find to say to the poorest, the least, the most unhappy, even the most degenerate man alive? Surely his own heart would be filled with mercy and compassion: "Ah, my own poor child." And what would be Eve's feelings? What a wealth of sympathy and love she would unfold. And shall their sentiments not be ours also? There is on earth no race, no people, no, not one single human being whom we are entitled to despise, either on account of his position, or

origin, his poverty, mode of speech, or religious beliefs, his ignorance, or even his sins. They are our brothers and sisters and have a right to our sympathy, our love, our help. We are all creatures of God, all children of Adam, all travelers to the same bourne—eternal life. Amen.

## SERMON XXXII

### The Endowment of the First Man

*"Let us make man to our own image and likeness"* (*Gen.* i. 26).

Having considered the creation of the first members of the human race, we will now pass on and examine more closely the state of our first parents when they came from the hand of their Maker. They were distinguished by being created to the image of God both in the natural and the supernatural order. The Fathers of the Church see indications of this two-fold resemblance in the words of God: "Let us make man to our own image and likeness." By the words "image" and "likeness" they understand the natural and the supernatural resemblance. Our instruction to-day will be concerned with considering where this resemblance lies.

I

We will begin with the natural resemblance. In what does it consist? The catechism asks: "How is the soul like to God?" and the answer is: "The soul is like to God because it is a spirit that will never die and has understanding and free will." To speak of a resemblance at once implies an object to be resembled. If we make a reproduction of anything it need not necessarily be of the same material as the original, nor even of equal size or extent. We see representations

on paper, in iron and marble, stone and wood of men composed of flesh and blood. The prophet Ezechiel was commanded to describe the city of Jerusalem—to draw a plan of it on a tile; yet the tile was thousands of times smaller than the great city. But there is one quality which is always in every case required of any reproduction, namely, resemblance to the object it purports to represent. The sketch on that tile, however feeble and faulty it may have been, must at least have outlined the mountain heights on which the city stood, the city wall, the towers, and the high over-topping temple. Now to proceed. We are told that man is a natural image of God; so we will make the comparison and see if we can find any likeness. The first thing we learn of God is that "He is a spirit infinitely perfect." Our soul is also a spirit—certainly an imperfect, a created spirit, but still a spirit, and here we find the first point of resemblance. God is omniscient and all-wise; a mind that embraces all things, past, present, and to come, what is possible as well as what is actual in every connection, at the same moment, in one single thought. And does our soul not think? It is gifted with understanding, by which it is able to examine and inquire into, comprehend, grasp, and retain many things. Certainly, compared to the wisdom of God it is barely as much as a little flickering lamp in the presence of the mighty sun, but, nevertheless, it constitutes a point of resemblance, and even a candle is an image, however feeble, of the light of the great sun. God is the absolutely independent spirit. He can do as He wills, creating or

not creating, punishing or forgiving, choosing or rejecting, as best pleases Him. Our soul also is endowed with free will. Holy Scripture tells us that God has delivered man to his own counsels, to choose water or fire, life or death, good or evil. We have an inner consciousness that tells us we are master of our own actions, and if such were not the case there would be an end to all responsibility; laws, tribunals, judges, prisons might be abolished, and even the distinction between right and wrong must disappear. But man is free, and in his freedom he is an image of God.

God is immortal; He lives from eternity to eternity. The soul also is immortal though depending for its life on God's eternal support.

These, then, are the great characteristics by which the soul is like to God: "It is a spirit which will never die, and which has understanding and free will." These features are spoken of as constituting the natural image of God in the soul because they are inherent in the nature of man, and being part of his nature they can never be effaced.

II

The second point of our meditation is to consider in what consisted the supernatural likeness of God in the soul. It consisted in man's endowment of sanctifying grace which made him a child of God, and an heir to heaven. The presence of sanctifying grace in the souls of our first parents was the very essence of their supernatural likeness to God. What is sanctifying grace? In the words of the catechism: "It is that grace which

makes the soul holy and pleasing to God." The soul in a state of grace is holy, for, as darkness gives way to light, so is sin driven out by grace, by which it is so beautified that it finds favor in the sight of the Trinity, and is raised up to the dignity of child of God and heir to heaven. Oh, precious gift of God! "Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called and should be the sons of God" (1 *John* iii. 1). This is the cry of St. John, and St. Paul says: "And if sons, heirs also; heirs indeed of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (*Rom.* viii. 17). Without the soul the body is but a lifeless corpse; so the soul without sanctifying grace is as a king who has neither kingdom, nor crown, nor scepter.

The dewdrop on the blade of grass in the early morning bears perhaps no very special significance for us; but the sun rises and is mirrored in the little dewdrop, giving it the imprint of its countenance, full of the light of heaven, making it sparkle and shine with the purest and most beautiful colors, green, red, blue, white, and causing it to look more lovely than the most costly precious stone. Without sanctifying grace the soul still remains an immortal being, far above all that is material. But what does it become when sanctifying grace is infused into it? A child of God, an heir to heaven. When the daughter of the Egyptian King Pharaoh saved the infant Moses from the water and adopted him as her own son she had power to give him the name, title, and rights of a royal prince. One thing, however, she was unable to bring about;

that the face of the rescued child should resemble her own. But the Lord God not only adopted Adam as His child; He, at the same time, engraved upon his soul a supernatural likeness to Himself.

If we carry our simile further we see that Pharaoh's daughter not only took Moses as her child, she also furnished him with everything suitable for a king's son, causing him to be educated according to the methods of the Egyptians, placing servants at his disposal, and providing him with a dwelling in keeping with his new dignity. God, our Lord, acted in a similar way toward our first parents. Having raised them by sanctifying grace to the position of children of God He then heaped upon them further graces and benefits of all kinds.

God imparted freely to Adam and Eve without requiring any corresponding effort on their part the higher knowledge of spiritual and moral things: "He created them in the science of the spirit . . . and showed them both good and evil" (*Ecclus.* xvii. 6). This knowledge which lies outside the scope of human understanding, even were it taxed to the uttermost, brought to man a bright stream of clear and unfailing light from heaven, enabling him to comprehend God to whom he was in such close relationship, and showing him his end and destiny and illuminating the way which lay before him.

It is untrue to say that man has gradually, in the course of history, developed from a condition of animal barbarism to his present state of civilization. On the contrary. In the beginning man

stood high, near to God, filled with the light of grace, illumined by the higher knowledge. But he fell from his high estate into sin, and sin resulted in spiritual and moral degradation and misery. We admit freely that Adam was not so well versed in the secrets of natural science, in the laws of electricity, and all the rest of it, as we are to-day; man has advanced in the natural order in inverse ratio to his spiritual decay and stagnation.

Pharaoh's daughter provided Moses, her adopted son, with servants who were always ready to do his bidding. God did the same for the first man whom He had adopted as His child. He gave him a soul and placed in the center of it free will to be its king, to whom all his other faculties were ready to render full obedience. Adam enjoyed complete peace and nothing save some external influence could disturb this harmony. In our souls, likewise, free will reigns as king of all our powers of soul and body, but peace is no longer present within us. How difficult we find it to subdue our inclinations to anger, to pride, to envy, to hatred; how very hard to resist the desires of gluttony, intemperance, and unchastity. Our will is a king indeed, but one pressed on all sides by rebels, who are kept under with the utmost difficulty; and when overpowered by the insurgents we but too often see the king stooping to make common cause with his own undutiful subjects. This is human nature: "The flesh lusteth against the spirit." How can body and soul tolerate each other? An elephant and an eagle would not make a good pair yoked to the same cart. One would fly upward, the other would

go forward; one would move rapidly, the other would advance slowly. With Adam all was different. By the supernatural gift of God all the powers of his soul and body worked in perfect harmony and obedience to his will.

When Pharaoh's daughter took the infant Moses home as her child she brought him to a palace worthy of the son of a king. God did not do less for the child of His adoption when He placed him in Paradise. It was a spot well worthy of such an inmate, for, though a portion of this earth, it might well be called the fore-court of heaven. Burning heat and piercing cold were not experienced there; no savage beasts invaded it; it harbored neither hunger, nor thirst, nor sorrow; work meant neither strain nor fatigue; pain was unheard of, so were disease and death, from which Adam and Eve were secured by the fruit growing on the tree of life. Oh, glorious dwelling-place of our first parents! Oh, how great were their possessions, dwelling as they did in Paradise possessed of the knowledge, the power, the immortality of the children of God.

Let us thank God for the privileges and graces which He showered on our first parents, and which were, in a measure, ours also, as we were destined to inherit them. Let us deplore sin, which robbed man of the enjoyment of his first state, and, rejoicing with all our hearts that the one thing needful has been restored to us, make it our greatest care never to lose it again. Adam lost it through his own fault, and we, in our turn, have each of us the strongest reasons for being watchful. "He that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall" (1 *Cor.* x. 12). Amen.

## SERMON XXXIII

### The Sin of Our First Parents

*"Of the tree of knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat"* (*Gen.* ii. 17).

In our last instruction we explained how our first parents were endowed with natural and supernatural gifts which made them resemble God, and we propose to-day to consider whether or not they retained this likeness. We learn in our catechism that: "Adam and Eve on account of their sin lost innocence and holiness and were doomed to sickness and death." As soon as they became guilty of sin the supernatural likeness to God was effaced, sanctifying grace was lost, and the supernatural knowledge with which God had enlightened them was, as it were, wiped out. The lower faculties of the soul and body opposed the mastery of the will; the flesh rose up in rebellion against the spirit: they became liable to sickness, suffering, and death, and were driven out of Paradise where their days of innocence, grace, and happiness had been spent. What a glorious inheritance they forfeited!

Those natural gifts which constitute the natural likeness of God in the soul, being inherent in the very essence of human nature, were not lost, but were weakened and disfigured. If we try to erase what has been written on a clean new sheet of white paper we can, if we are careful, succeed in keeping the paper intact, but its first freshness

and crispness are gone. So the soul of man, though it retains the natural image of God, having lost it in the supernatural order, is but a ruin of its former glory. The catechism explains to us that the soul, "though still immortal, is a fallen spirit." "Our nature was corrupted by the sin of our first parents, which darkened our understanding, weakened our will, and left in us a strong inclination to evil."

It must, indeed, have been a great and grievous sin that could work such havoc. What was its nature? Adam and Eve believed the word of the serpent in preference to that of God, whose command they disobeyed by eating the forbidden fruit. In order that we may recognize the gravity of this sin let us, with the help of the Holy Spirit, consider the three following points:

I. The command disobeyed.

II. The tempter and the nature of the temptation.

III. The sinner and the nature of the sin.

I

The command which, by their sin, our first parents disobeyed would have been easy to observe. While free to satisfy their wants on all the trees of Paradise, the fruit of one single tree was forbidden them. They could plead neither hunger nor want in extenuation of their sin. "Of every tree of Paradise shalt thou eat; but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat." Now if all the trees had been forbidden them, and they had been allowed to eat of the fruit of one only, the command of God, though

surely not overtaxing their strength, might have been considered hard. Further, it was a clear and distinct behest, naming the tree to be avoided, "the tree of knowledge of good and evil," and indicating the precise spot where it stood in the center of the garden of Paradise. They knew Him whose will it was that placed this restriction upon them, and did not disobey in ignorance, for Eve said, "God has forbidden us." The appointed penalty for infringing the law were severe, showing that it was meant to be a strictly binding order, and that the disregard of it must be viewed as a very serious matter indeed. "On what day soever thou shalt eat of it thou shalt die the death." In addition to all this our first parents were aware of what reward awaited them if they remained faithful, that the precincts of the earthly Paradise would be exchanged for the bliss and security of heaven. In face, therefore, of all the circumstances attending the act of disobedience of our first parents, we can see that their sin was grave in the extreme.

II

The tempter and the nature of the temptation are next to be considered.

Our first parents were established in a state of innocence and not the slightest temptation either of the intellect or of the flesh, or the smallest inclination to evil, could rise up within them in opposition to their will. Nevertheless it was part of the divine plan that they should by means of struggle and victory attain eternal happiness, and

for this reason external temptation was allowed to assail them.

Who was the tempter? It was he who, as St. Bonaventure tells us, well versed in the art of temptation, is ever ready and willing to tempt. It was the spirit of evil.

He has reason to be well versed in the art of temptation, for he was himself precipitated from the greatest heights into the depths of damnation. He knew the desires and thoughts that brought about his own fall, and he was well aware that to awaken these same impulses of pride in the hearts of others was to lead them surely into the path of temptation, and this was what he, above all, desired to accomplish.

Why did Satan so ardently desire to lead men into temptation? Because of the deeply-rooted, poisonous, hellish envy he felt toward them. He was so unhappy and they were so happy; he was in hell and they were in Paradise; he had been turned back on the very threshold of heaven, while they were almost about to mount the thrones which had been originally prepared for him and the other fallen angels. That a great spirit, created in glory as he was, should be lodged eternally in hell, while men, formed of the dust of the earth, were to be exalted and blessed forever in heaven was to him an unendurable thought. He would do anything and everything to rob them of their happiness and make them as miserable as himself.

There is no mistaking Satan's desire to lead men astray; but had he the power? Yes, as far as God permitted, and in the manner God per-

mitted; God allowed him to assume the form of a serpent and abase himself to the level of this crawling, poisonous, treacherous animal, not only in order to humiliate the tempter himself, but to afford a warning for Adam and Eve to be on their guard against deceitfulness and cunning.

As regards the manner of the temptation, the evil one began with the woman, as the weaker vessel, and in order that through her he might reach the man. We note in this temptation of Eve's three clearly defined stages: 1. A question; 2. An assertion; 3. A promise.

The question was: "Why hath God commanded you that you should not eat of every tree of Paradise?" He detected the weak spot, which indeed Eve herself had unsuspectingly made known to him, by telling him what was allowed and what was forbidden them. They might eat of all the trees of Paradise, only not of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, lest they die the death. "Lest perhaps we die." These words laid bare the dangerous place in her soul, giving utterance to a slowly, faintly, dawning doubt as to whether the threatened punishment would really be carried into effect.

From interrogation the corrupter passed on to bold and blasphemous assertion, or rather to denial; he contradicted the Almighty: "No, you shall not die." Next, an alluring bait, a tempting promise was held out: "In what day soever you shall eat thereof you shall be as God, knowing good from evil." What a prospect, to become like God, mighty, wise, independent, omniscient!

III

And now, in conclusion, we will contemplate the person of the sinner, and the nature of the sin. The first to sin amongst mankind was Eve, and after her Adam. As soon as the promise of the tempter became intelligible to her Eve forgot the command of God, and the threatened punishment, forgot God Himself, and became intoxicated with the proud thought of becoming like unto God. As she pictured in her mind this undreamed-of elevation, it became pleasing to her, and she desired it; and desiring it she agreed to eat, and by the enjoyment of the forbidden fruit to satisfy her desire. The root of her sin was the wish to be like God. She then turned her eyes on the fruit and finding it beautiful to look upon and good to taste she stretched out her hand, took it, and ate. Sin originated in her mind from pride and was matured by the sensual desire to eat. She gave to her husband and he also ate.

Here we have the grievous and terrible history of the first sin by which with full knowledge and consent, the first command of God, clearly expressed and easy of fulfilment, was disobeyed. It was a sin of unbelief, because the word of God, threatening them with death, was disregarded, and the deceitful promise of greatness made by the enemy were trusted and believed; a sin of ingratitude whereby they forgot that everything they were and all they had or could have was the gift of God; a sin of overweening pride, which hoped independently of God, and in spite of Him, to attain a height which is beyond the reach of all creatures; a sin of levity committed

at the instigation of one whose whole exterior, speech, glance, and form should have suggested reasons for caution. A grievous sin, considered not only from the point of view of the law which it disobeyed, but likewise from the manner of the temptation, and the person of the sinner.

We deplore, indeed we have good reason to do so, that our first parents sinned in Paradise, but let us beware of accusing and blaming them too much. Are we any better than they? It is true they possessed great graces and that they lost them. But we, too, constantly deface the supernatural image of God, sanctifying grace, in our soul by grievous sin. The first man was endowed by God in an exceptional manner, but though the graces we receive may be less, they have been won by the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. We have before our eyes what Adam was not in a position to see, that sin leads to sorrow, pain, and death, and we know, what he had never experienced, how great an enemy to mankind is the evil spirit, how deceitful, how powerful, how bold. If we are weaker than Adam we have in the Blessed Sacrament means to help us which were not given to him. Adam sinned, but, as far as we know, he sinned but once, and spent a life some hundreds of years long in doing penance. How often have we sinned, and where is our penance? Our first parents sinned grievously because they wished to be like God; we sin often enough for a trifle of money, for a momentary pleasure, or from some motive so petty and mean that it does not bear either to be spoken or thought of. We will pity, but not blame, our first parents,

learning from their fall to rate sin and its consequences at their true value, while we realize how easily one becomes a prey to it and how hard it is to expiate it. We have followed them in their sin; we must follow them in their repentance and, like them, we will find one day the gates of heaven open to receive us. Amen.

## SERMON XXXIV

### Original Sin

*"And so death passed upon all men in whom all have sinned"* (*Rom.* v. 12).

OUR last instruction brought before our minds in all its details the sin committed by our first parents in Paradise, with the disastrous results which followed from it. As a consequence of their fall they lost those supernatural gifts with which they had been endowed at their creation, thereby defacing the natural image of God in their souls. Moreover the effects of their sin have not been confined to our first parents themselves, but have brought misery and trouble upon the whole human race. Sin with its attendant evils has been transmitted by Adam to his descendants, so that men are born into this world already tainted with the guilt of it. Two things, both of which, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we to-day propose to consider, have passed from Adam upon every one of us:

I. The sin itself.
II. The consequences of the sin.

I

In reflecting on the sin inherited by all men from Adam we have to take into consideration: the character of the sin itself, the manner in which we inherit it, and the name by which it is known to us.

Adam bequeathed to his descendants one sin only, namely, that one which he was guilty of in Paradise. Any sins he may have committed subsequently have not descended to us. Nevertheless it would not be correct to suppose that the inherited sin is the same in us that it was in Adam. What is the difference? The sin of Adam was an action; a passing, probably even a momentary action. He took and ate. But in ourselves it is not an action, but a condition; in other words, our sinfulness consists in the state of sin in which we come into the world. Let me give you an illustration of what I mean. A thief stretches out his hand and takes what does not belong to him; this is the act of a moment. But he keeps the stolen goods in his possession, maybe his whole life long. Now, knowingly and willingly, to harbor stolen goods is sinful; it is to live in a state of sin. In the same way the sin actually committed by Adam becomes in us merely a state. What goes to constitute this state in us? It must be borne in mind that the wonderful and glorious supernatural gifts bestowed on Adam, would, had he not sinned, have passed to his descendants. The whole human race was endowed and equipped in the person of Adam, but he sinned and by his sin he lost this endowment and property not only for himself, but for all who came after him. Being children of Adam we are denied the grace that should be ours, the grace given to mankind as represented by Adam, and so we find ourselves in a condition which was not intended for us, and which is displeasing to almighty God. You may say it is easy to understand that, being chil-

dren of Adam, we should come into the world in a state which is displeasing to God, but why this should constitute a sin for us it is difficult to see. It is our misfortune, not our fault. When children are born into poverty through the recklessness of their parents it is a great misfortune for the children; but, surely, the blame attaches to the spendthrift parents who are responsible for such a deplorable state of things. This is true, but nevertheless we are bound to believe firmly that we come into this world having on our souls that which bears the full, proper, and real character of a sin. Have we of our own will contributed to this state? No, most certainly we have not. It is present in new-born infants, who are as yet incapable of evil. Are we, then, to blame for finding ourselves in a condition to which we have not in any way contributed by our own will? Now the condition in which we are born is sin only because it can not be separated from the sin of Adam, to which we owe it. Adam was not only our parent; he was also the representative appointed by God of the whole human race. What he did, we did also. For this reason the condition in which we are born has necessarily reference to the sin of Adam, by which it is caused, and this sin comprises two parts: the past and the present. The present is the unsatisfactory state in which we come into the world; the past the sin committed by our representative, Adam, who acted on our behalf and in our name.

Now let us inquire in what way the sin was transmitted. First, from whom was it transmitted? From Adam only, not from Eve. Had

Eve alone fallen there would have been no original sin. On whom did it devolve? On all the children of Adam who have been or who are yet to be born, with the one single exception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. What is the cause of sin passing to us in this way? It passes by reason of our descent from Adam; to be a child of Adam is to be a sinner. Picture to yourselves an enormous chain of great length, each section and division of which is attached to the one immediately preceding it, and so all are joined to the initial link. This first link is stoutly fastened up to a great height, so that if it becomes loose, giving way and breaking, then the entire chain must sustain a great fall and perhaps go to pieces altogether. It is because we are, by descent, joined to Adam, our father, that we must all share in the effects of his fall.

From what has been said the name of the sin of which we are speaking can easily be gathered. The catechism explains: "This sin is called original because it comes down to us from our first parents, and we are brought into this world with its guilt on our soul."

We understand what an inheritance is, and what is meant by inheriting. The property of the parents passes, by right of inheritance, to their children; children inherit the property of their parents, and often with it their debts and responsibilities; sometimes even disorders of the body and tendencies and inclinations of the mind. As his descendants we were entitled to succeed to all the magnificent gifts bestowed upon Adam, but because they have been squandered and lost we

come into the world deprived of this inheritance of original grace, and this constitutes for us original sin. The terms original grace and original sin explain each other.

Now, that we have made clear what it is, let us see if original sin is a reality. It seems shadowy and mysterious to us, but it is certain that it really does exist. Holy Church, the Scriptures, and the teaching of tradition are all fully agreed on the subject. The Church, speaking at the Council of Trent, said (*Sess.* v. 2): "If any one assert that through his disobedience Adam has transmitted to the human race only death and the punishments of the body, and not sin, which is the death of the soul, let him be anathema." This establishes clearly and beyond doubt that Adam has transmitted sin which is the death of the soul to the whole human race.

Holy Scripture is in accordance with the teaching of the Church, and the doctrine of original sin is brought before our minds by St. Paul in his epistle to the Romans when he says: "Wherefore as by one man sin entered into this world and by sin death; and so death passed upon all men in whom all have sinned" (*Rom.* v. 12). The "one man" spoken of by the apostle is Adam. His act it was that first introduced sin into the world, and from sin came death; and because sin passed upon all men, so, too, has death passed upon all without exception. "In whom all have sinned."

The teaching of tradition bears out what is said both by the Church and in Holy Scripture. From time immemorial it has been customary to baptize

infants as soon as possible after birth. They are baptized for the forgiveness of sins, but what sins could they be supposed guilty of? Certainly not of any committed of their own free will, for they are incapable of evil. From what, then, are they being cleansed? From original sin. St. Augustine, foremost among all the doctors of the Church, has laid special stress on the doctrine of original sin. In confuting certain heresies denying it he says: "It is not I who have discovered the doctrine of original sin, which has been held by the Church from the most ancient times, but it is you who by denying it are innovators"; and again: "What I have written differs in nothing from what the commentators of Holy Scripture have taught concerning original sin, and they received the same teaching from their forefathers and handed it on to those who came after them."

II

We have thoroughly examined the nature of original sin and seen that it really exists. It is not only the sin itself, but also the consequences of it that have come upon mankind. What are these consequences? Briefly, they may be described as being the direct opposite of those magnificent qualities which were Adam's before the fall. Adam possessed sanctifying grace, but his descendants have fallen into disfavor with God. His mind was enlightened by the higher knowledge; his children are in darkness, darkness so profound that many of them have lost even the knowledge of the true God. In him every move-

ment of the mind and of the body was controlled by the will, but to us he has left concupiscence as a legacy. "The imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth" (*Gen.* viii. 21). Paradise was his dwelling-place, while we are exiled in this vale of tears. He had no need to work for his daily bread; his descendants rejoice in no such immunity, but groan throughout their whole lives under the hard yoke of labor and toil—"In the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat thy bread." He was free from the sting of death, but we must pay the debt in all its shamefulness—"In what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death." "By one man is sin entered into this world, and by sin death."

It was a magnificent inheritance which Adam had power to leave us had he not sinned! If he could speak to us he would surely say: "Yes, my children, and no one has sorrowed for it more bitterly than I have done." But our cause of complaint against our parents in the natural order, great as it is, is as nothing when weighed in the balance with the gratitude due from us to God, for giving us a second and a divine Father, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, made man for us. How can we sinners be so reluctant to work and suffer, since Jesus Himself has shared all our pains? Why are we so unwilling to give ourselves up to penance and sorrow for the sins which Christ Himself has expiated with His precious blood? Have we not strength to renounce the delights of earth, when, by the grace won for us by our Saviour, we see the gates of heaven stand-

ing open to receive us? "O happy fault of Adam, which gave us so great a Redeemer." Why should we fear death which, through the mercy of God, will be for us but the beginning of eternal life? Amen.

## SERMON XXXV

### The Promise of the Saviour

*"I will put enmities between thee and the woman"* (*Gen.* iii. 15).

We considered last week the state of misery into which the whole human race was thrown by the sin of Adam. Sin, with its evil consequences, was transmitted to all mankind, excepting only the Blessed Virgin Mary, who, as the catechism explains, "through the merits of her divine Son, was preserved free from the guilt of original sin, and this privilege is called her Immaculate Conception." In the course of the year on the feasts of Our Lady, and especially on that of her Immaculate Conception, we hope to find opportunities of addressing you more particularly on this subject. At present we will proceed to consider, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit:

I. What would have become of man if God had abandoned him after the fall.

II. What the mercy of God has done for him.

I

If God had abandoned man after he fell into sin and shown him no mercy, not a single human being could have received grace or been saved. The reason of this is clear. If you give a man the most entrancingly interesting book in the world illustrated with the most beautiful pictures, he will not be able to read it if he has no eyes

to see it. Exert yourself as much as you like with your hands and feet, you will never fly without wings; neither can a dead man move. Now listen to what is necessary for eternal salvation. It is necessary to be a child of God, by sanctifying grace, or, what is the same thing, to contain within one's self the germ of eternal life. Adam had lost for all mankind the gift of sanctifying grace; therefore, if God had abandoned mankind after the fall, no one could have been saved.

The issue is the same, if we start from the proposition that the descendants of Adam were all sinners. Could they by their own power free themselves from the evil effects of sin? To do this it would have been necessary for them to make complete satisfaction to God for their sin, and this is not in the power of either man or angel or of any creature. They were helpless by the very nature of things, for to atone to the divine justice such satisfaction was necessary as would be commensurate with the majesty and dignity of the person offended, compared to the nothingness and lowliness of the offender. How immeasurable and unfathomable is the chasm between God and His creatures! The smallest child is able by its act to spoil and mar and destroy the greatest picture in the world, yet is not capable of contributing one single line or stroke of the brush toward its restoration.

Therefore, if man had been left to his own resources, he could never have released himself from the bonds of sin, nor regained sanctifying grace. No one could have been saved, and who knows to what depths of unbelief, superstition,

error, and ignorance the human race might have descended! One hardly dares to mention, and one shudders to think of the swamp of sensuality, immorality, and vice into which he might have fallen. "And man when he was in honor did not understand; he is compared to senseless beasts and is become like to them" (*Ps.* xlviii. 13, 21).

II

God did not abandon man, but had mercy on him, showing this mercy by promising him a Saviour; by preparing him for His coming; and, finally, by actually sending Him. The Incarnation of our Saviour is treated of in the second article of the creed. We will at present confine ourselves to considering the promise of a Redeemer made to man, and the manner in which God prepared man for His coming.

God's mercy was first manifested to man when He undertook to send him a Redeemer and—so great is the goodness and mercy of God—the sin was barely completed when this promise was given. Almost before the first signs of contrition showed themselves, before the expulsion from Paradise, even before the sentence was pronounced, God said to the serpent: "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed; she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel" (*Gen.* iii. 15). The serpent had been victorious in the garden of Eden, but one was to come, the son of the woman, by whom he would be conquered. With what joy must our first parents have heard these words! What comfort must they have given them as they

left the earthly paradise! How the remembrance of them must have upheld them through the toil and sufferings of their lives and in the pains of death! How earnestly did they surely strive to imprint these consolations deep in the hearts of their children.

God's mercy did not rest after making the promise. He began at once to prepare mankind for the coming Redeemer, and signs of this preparation become evident in the history of the human race in two ways.

First in the history of the Jews. God chose them before all the nations of the earth, giving them His law, and binding them to Himself by mutual promises, in order that belief in the true God, and hope in the coming of the Redeemer might be kept alive in their hearts. It seems almost incredible that this people could have forgotten God, the Lord, and the Saviour. Every letter of their law, their different religious celebrations, the miracles wrought for them in Egypt, in the Red Sea, in the desert, all ought to have kept Him constantly before their minds; their temple and the Holy of Holies should have deepened their consciousness of Him; their customs and sacrifices pointed significantly to the future Saviour, and their prophets spoke to them constantly of the hope of Israel. Without doubt the Old Law was a preparation of the people of Israel for a new covenant.

Moreover the Pagans were not left to themselves. God spoke to them as He speaks to them still in our own day by the voice of conscience and by interior inspiration. St. Paul says: "The

Gentiles who have not the law . . . are a law to themselves. Who show the work of the law written in their hearts'' (*Rom.* ii. 14, 15).

Further, God's terrible judgments on man should have gone far to keep alive belief in Him and in the workings of His justice. In these days of train and telegraph when a calamity of any kind comes to pass, be it a flood, a railway accident, or a mining disaster, the news of it flies like wildfire all over the world. In a few hours it is the universally absorbing topic; a week later every one has forgotten all about it. But in olden days news traveled much more slowly, though it became after a lapse of time just as widely diffused, and was therefore impressed much more deeply on the mind. Think of the world-wide fame of the history of the flood, of the building of the tower of Babel, or of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrha. What a vivid recollection of these terrible occurrences men must long have retained. Could these things be heard and thought of and discussed without reference to God, the ruler of the human race? God also raised up amongst the Pagans themselves, or caused to be sent to them from other nations, specially remarkable men to teach them, and, more important than all, His Providence so disposed things that the Jewish people came into contact with all the then most civilized and foremost Pagan nations. The patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, traveled like beacons in the darkness through the land of Cana. Their descendants found their way to Egypt, the stronghold of idolatry, and there bore the most wonderful testimony to the true God.

They returned through Cana, meeting on all sides with opposition from the neighboring heathen states. Later we find the wisdom of Solomon and the building of his temple making as great a stir among the Gentiles as among the Jews, and the Queen of Saba even visited Solomon. The people of Israel, having been conquered, made prisoners and dispersed, were scattered through Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Macedonia, Greece, and Rome, bringing with them wherever they went their belief in the one true God, their hopes of a Saviour, their feasts, their prayers, their customs, and their holy writings. It was by the dispensation of Providence that the very greatest of the people of Israel found themselves amongst strangers: Moses in Egypt, Daniel in Babylon, Ezechiel in Assyria, and so on. Truly God did not deny to the heathens opportunities of the knowledge of the promised Redeemer. His mercy was clearly manifested to them also.

A question which may very justly be asked is why God should have been more merciful to the sin of man than to that of the angels. First because the angels sinned with great deliberation and were hardened in evil; not so man. Moreover, the angels incited themselves to sin, but man was tempted and led away. Finally, only a part of the angels fell, a large part certainly, but there were still countless choirs left for the glory of heaven. But after the sin of Adam the entire human race, from first to last, would have been lost but for the mercy of God.

Oh, thanks, eternal thanks be to the most holy and merciful God, that He has had compassion on

the children of Adam! How could our first parents have felt it possible to fall away from Thee, O God? How could their children, after the promise of a Redeemer, and even after His actual coming, have continued to offend Thee? How can it be that Christians who know and believe that the Saviour, Thy only-begotten Son, redeemed us at the price of His precious blood, still sin against Thee? The ingratitude of men is almost as incomprehensible as the infinite mercy of God. Thanks, eternal thanks to Thee, O God! Forgive us our trespasses and accept our resolve to love and serve Thee forever. Amen.

## SERMON XXXVI

### The Name of Jesus

*"Thou shalt call His name Jesus"* (*Matt.* i. 21).

OUR instructions hitherto have been directed to the explanation of the first article of the Apostles' Creed: "I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth." It is therefore God the Father, the first person of the Blessed Trinity, and His work of creation that form the subject-matter of the first part of the Apostles' Creed. The second part, from the second to the seventh article inclusive, treats of the Son of God, His incarnation, His life and sufferings, and His work of redemption.

We will embark to-day on the consideration of the second article of the Creed: "And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord." At the close of our last meditation we saw that, deeply and shamefully as the human race had sinned, God in His mercy promised a Redeemer, a Redeemer for whose coming He prepared all men, Gentiles as well as Jews. God kept His promise to the full, really and actually sending a Saviour to mankind, and we learn from the following answers of the catechism who it was that He sent:

"Who is the Redeemer?" "Our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is the Redeemer of mankind." "What do you believe of Jesus Christ?" "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the second person of the Blessed Trinity, true God

and true man." That person, therefore, whom we know by the name of Jesus Christ is our Redeemer and is no other than the Son of God Himself and is Our Lord and our Master. Let us for the time being put every other consideration on one side, giving ourselves up to-day simply and solely to the contemplation of the two sacred names of our Saviour: the name of Jesus and the name of Christ.

I

The name "Jesus" is a Hebrew word which, translated into our language, is equivalent to deliverer, rescuer, liberator, saviour. We find two people mentioned in the Old Testament who are called Jesus and who, if we take them as types of our Saviour, fully bear out this signification of the name. First there is Joshua, or Jesus, the son of Nun. He was appointed by God to be the head of the chosen people and, after the death of Moses, actually led them into the promised land, besieging and conquering the cities that resisted, subduing hostile countries, and dividing the acquired land among the twelve tribes of Israel. Truly he was the saviour of his people. Then we have the son of Josaphat, who was also called Jesus. After long captivity he, jointly with Zorobabel, led his people safely home to their native land. Both these men were saviours of their people in deed as well as in name; but how much more truly a Saviour is Jesus our Lord? They delivered their own people, but Christ is the Saviour of all peoples. They conducted those under their care to an earthly fatherland, but

Christ opened the way to our eternal and heavenly home. If further proof of the meaning of the word "Jesus" were necessary it can be found in the fact, which surely removes all doubt on the subject, namely, that the angel before the birth of our Saviour gave him the name Jesus, and pointed out the reason and significance of it: "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins" (*Matt.* i. 21).

Let us look a little more closely into the origin and meaning, the power and efficacy of this name.

As regards its origin and the use made of it, Jesus is the holiest of names. It originated in heaven, created by God Himself, and brought on earth by the angel Gabriel. Mary and Joseph were the first to pronounce the sacred name and to repeat it with reverence and devotion. It was used by the apostles and martyrs and is continually on the lips of the saints in heaven. Where can we find a name which has been spoken with more love and devotion than has the name of Jesus? "Holy is His name," so holy that we are scarcely worthy to utter it, and when we do so it should be with the greatest reverence and devotion.

The signification of the name for us is very sweet, for who is it that it recalls to our minds? When we hear that word, of whom do we think? Of the eternal Son of God, who came down from heaven and made Himself our brother; of the little infant in the crib, made man for us; of Him who suffered and died for us upon the cross; of the Son of God made man, hidden under the appearance of bread in the Blessed Sacrament of the

Altar; of the glorious resurrection of the Lord, who, now sitting at the right hand of the Father, makes the happiness of the elect. Oh, sweet name of Jesus, embodying all that is consoling for us in the past and for the future, in our memories and our hopes, in heaven and on earth.

It is a name of great power and efficacy: "Mighty is His name." Any miracle in the New Testament not wrought directly by our Saviour Himself was done in His name. "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, arise and walk," said St. Peter to the lame man at the gate of the Temple. At the name of Jesus disease is overcome, evil spirits fly in fear, the dead rise again. At the name of Jesus every knee bends, that is in heaven, on the earth, or under the earth. It is mighty in supplication, obtaining for us all that we ask. Let us trust to the power of the name of Jesus, calling on it in temptation, in our every need, and above all at the hour of death.

II

We will now turn to the consideration of that other name given to our Saviour. "Christ" is a Greek word; in Hebrew it is translated by Messias, but the meaning of both words in our own tongue is "the Anointed." It may appear strange that Jesus, who never received any bodily unction, should be named the Anointed.

Why was He so called? The anointing of His feet by Mary Magdalen was not an official unction, and when after the taking down from the cross His sacred body was embalmed with sweet spices, His divine mission was already in great part ful-

filled. This being so, why was Christ called the Anointed?

For the reason that under the Old Law the prophets, high priests, and kings were anointed with oil, and because Jesus is our chief prophet, priest, and king. Concerning the prophets we have God's commission to Elias: "Go and return on thy way through the desert to Damascus . . . and Eliseus, the son of Saphat of Abelmeula, thou shalt anoint to be prophet in thy room" (3 *Kings* xix. 15, 16). At the command of God, Moses anointed Aaron as high-priest. Instructions for the preparation of the oil and its preservation, joined to the strict prohibition to use it for anointing any one else, are all set forth in Exodus (Ch. xx.). Saul, the first king of Israel, was anointed by Samuel, David in the same way. Till they had been anointed Eliseus was not a prophet, Aaron was not high priest, Saul was not king. By an anointed person, therefore, is meant one chosen by God Himself for a high and holy office, appointed by Him, by Him made fit for it and endowed with the grace needful. So what, then, is the meaning of calling Jesus the Anointed? First, because He was chosen by the Father to fill the most sublime office, one which makes Him at the same time first king, most high priest, and greatest prophet—that of Saviour of the world. It also signifies that He was appointed to this sublime office by God, and by the miracle of His life and death proclaimed as the Saviour before men. Finally, the affixing of Christ to the name of Jesus conveys to us that He was specially fitted and provided with the grace of God for the work

He had to do. He was Himself God and His very incarnation constituted His anointing. Being God, Jesus Christ was born a prophet whose vision of the future was more far-reaching than that of any other; a king to whom the allegiance of all creatures is due; the most high priest who surpasses all others alike in personal holiness, in the merits of His sacrifice, and in priestly authority.

Let us lay well to heart what we say when we add Christ to the name of Jesus. We mean: Thou art for us the teacher of the truth, the interpreter of the future, the heaven-sent prophet, and we believe Thee as we are bound to do. We mean: Thou art our king set over us by God, and we will faithfully keep Thy commandments. Shall we dare to refuse obedience to God's anointed?

The name "Christ" points to Jesus as our priest. With what infinite trust and devotion we should contemplate the sacrifice which, completed on the cross, is yet renewed day by day in the Holy Mass. Yes, it is a holy, sweet, sublime, and mighty name. How gladly we should say: "Praised be Jesus Christ!" How full of meaning are these words compared to the unmeaning phrases current at the present day; they are as pure gold to dross. May we never dishonor the name of Jesus Christ by using it thoughtlessly or in anger, still less with wilful irreverence.

A peasant who was grievously ill was about to undergo a very severe operation. The doctor told him if there was anything he wished to say he had better say it without delay. The worthy fellow raised himself up in bed and cried out in a firm

voice: "Praised be Jesus Christ!" He could not have expressed more clearly what he wished to be the last feeling of his heart, the last words on his lips. Let us make use often of the same words. Jesus, for Thee I live, for Thee I die—Thine am I, in life and in death. Amen.

## SERMON XXXVII

### Jesus, the Messias

*"Search the Scriptures and the same are they that give testimony of Me"* (*John* v. 39).

We have fully considered the meaning of the sacred names "Jesus Christ" and, if we look and see what the catechism tells us concerning Him, we shall find it there asserted and taught that beyond doubt He who bore these names was the Redeemer promised to mankind by almighty God. But, we may naturally ask, what reason have we for accepting and believing such a statement? I answer: We have this reason: that in Him was fulfilled all that the prophets foretold concerning the looked-for Redeemer.

Shortly before His passion our Saviour deputed two of His apostles to go to Jerusalem to prepare the Pasch. He mentioned no street or house to which they were to go, still less the name of any householder to whom they were to address themselves. How, then, were the two disciples to find their way to the right place? They were directed to follow a certain man, and, entering whichever house he entered, to pray him to give them the necessary place to eat the Pasch. But among the thousands whom they would meet in the streets of Jerusalem how would they be able to distinguish this one particular man whom they were to follow? Jesus indicated him to them, not by name, but by means of certain distinguishing marks. He

will meet you; he will meet you at the entrance to the town; he will carry a water-jug. These were the marks by which they were to recognize —among thousands—the man whom they sought, and whom they were to follow. In the same way God the Lord gave us, in the Old Testament, not one, but a hundred signs by which the Saviour can be recognized among all men. He in whom these marks are to be found, He is the Saviour. Now in whom do we find united all these signs without exception?

With the help of the Holy Spirit we will give two answers to that question:

I. All these signs, without exception, are united in the person of Jesus Christ.

II. They are to be found in no one else.

I

In Jesus Christ all the signs and marks of the promised Redeemer are clearly to be recognized. The prophesies concerning Him contained in the Old Testament were written long before the birth of Christ, and are still read by the Jews. The entire life of our Saviour is there foreshadowed, and, if taking the Old Testament in one hand and the New Testament in the other hand, you first carefully search out everything that is foretold of the coming Redeemer, and then, reading through all the circumstances of the life of Jesus Christ, compare the two closely, you will find that everything made known by almighty God through the prophets concerning the Saviour was fulfilled in Him. Let us go more particularly into the details. We find that it was prophesied that Our

Lord was to be preceded by a precursor, that He would be a descendant of Abraham and of the House of David, that He would be born in Bethlehem of a virgin. The moment when the scepter shall have passed from Juda is indicated as the time at which His birth will take place; in other words, when Israel shall have fallen under the power of a foreign State. It is not necessary to point out that all these signs attended the birth of Christ. Every child knows who was His precursor, who was His Mother, and when and where He was born. We will compare and examine the matter more closely still. What does the Old Testament say of the life of the Saviour? That He would be the teacher of the poor and the ignorant: "The bruised reed He shall not bend, the smoking flax He shall not quench." Countless miracles would be wrought by Him on the lame, the blind, the deaf, on those possessed, on the dead. He would enter Jerusalem on the colt of an ass. Now glance through the New Testament: You will see that all this was realized in Our Lord's life down to the very smallest particular. If we turn once more to the Old Testament we find the sufferings of the Redeemer graphically described. Dismiss from your mind all that you already know of the passion and look only at this picture drawn of Christ in the Old Testament. He is presented to us as a man—the Man of Sorrows, acquainted with grief, surrounded by enemies, sold for thirty pieces of silver, beaten, wounded, spat upon, mocked at, trodden under foot, from the crown of His head to the sole of His foot one single wound, a worm

and no man, counted with the wicked; His hands and feet pierced, His clothing divided, having gall and vinegar to drink, forsaken by God, but, through all, patient as a lamb, and praying for His persecutors; put to death, but rising again in glory; ascending into heaven, whose gates are flung open wide to receive Him. In the New Testament the same picture is drawn, line for line; nothing is wanting. Jesus Christ is in truth the promised Redeemer, for in Him alone were all these things fulfilled.

Not only were the circumstances of Our Lord's life foreshadowed in the Old Testament, but the particular events which were to follow on it were also forecast: the descent of the Holy Ghost, the downfall of Jerusalem, the growth of a new kingdom, its extent, and the length of its duration. Well, truly after the ascension of Christ the Holy Ghost did come, in a visible and wonderful manner; Jerusalem was destroyed and Christianity took root, growing and increasing, in spite of all obstacles, and contrary to all expectation.

How, then, did it come about, if everything pointed so clearly to Jesus Christ as the promised Redeemer, that the Jews who were expecting and looking for a Messias, and who knew the Sacred Books thoroughly, refused to acknowledge Him? First, it is to be noted that the most pious, the holiest among the Jewish people did recognize in the person of Jesus Christ the promised Redeemer. This is true of St. John the Baptist. "Behold," he said to his disciples, "the lamb of God, behold Him who takest away the sins of the world." It is true also of the parents of St. John,

Zachary and Elizabeth, of our Lady and St. Joseph, of the Holy Simeon and Anna the prophetess, of Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. Now and again even from the populace we hear the cry: "Indeed this man was the Son of God!" "A great Prophet is risen up amongst us and God has visited His people!" But it is a fact that the bulk of the people rejected Our Lord and followed the example of their leaders, the high priests, the scribes, and the Pharisees. It had been foretold that this would be so, and in the destruction of the city and the temple of Jerusalem we have the realization of the punishment appointed for this rejection. Because they refused to acknowledge the true Messias the Jews are continually deceived and disappointed by false prophets, and they will ever continue to hope in vain for the true Redeemer, whom they will not see till Jesus comes again in the glory of heaven.

II

There can be beyond Christ no other Redeemer. After Him several men arose, and claimed to be the promised Messias. It would be very easy to prove that their claims were false, but, as no one now believes in the justice of them, we need not trouble to go into this. It is also clear that there can be in the future no second Redeemer. Any future Messias would have to be of the family of David; it was extirpated under the Emperor Vespasian. He would require to be of the tribe of Juda; the tribes of Juda and Benjamin are so intermingled that it would be impossible to distinguish one from the other. The Messias was to

live at the time of the second temple and before the destruction of Jerusalem; the temple has been destroyed long ages ago, and the city conquered, plundered, and annihilated. So if, as the Jews say, the Saviour is yet to come, we are in a position to reply with the greatest decision that they will look for his coming in vain. If Jesus Christ was not the promised Saviour of the world then there has been, and never will be, and can be no other, and it was all to no purpose that He was promised, and foretold, and so long and earnestly expected; then the books of prophecies should be consigned to the flames and burned as liars.

But the promised Saviour did surely come, and so clear and certain is this truth that in order to remain ignorant of it one would be obliged to shut one's eyes deliberately. Jesus Himself said to the Jews: "Search the Scriptures, and the same are they that give testimony of Me" (*John* v. 39). He meant to say that if we read in the sacred books all that had been foretold of the Messias we should see that all the things spoken by the prophets had their fulfillment in Him, implying, beyond doubt, that He is the Messias. When the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well said to Jesus, "I know that the Messias cometh," He answered: "I am He who am speaking with thee" (*John* iv. 25, 26). To the disciples going to Emmaus the risen Christ said, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and so entered into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things that were concerning Him" (*Luke* xxiv. 26, 27). He showed them that

in Him and in His passion what the prophets had predicted had come to pass.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Redeemer who was promised to our forefathers in Paradise, and who, foretold by the prophets, was prefigured in types and ardently looked for by the Jews. Both the Old and the New Testaments testify to it, the apostles taught it, the Church believes it, and Jesus Christ Himself declares it. This fact is full of the deepest significance for us. Jesus Christ it is whom we have to believe, whom we must follow, and on whom all our hopes of salvation are to be built, while we rejoice that He came, and return Him unending thanks for His coming. For there is no other name given us under heaven, whereby we can be saved, than the name of Jesus Christ, Saviour of the world. Amen.

## SERMON XXXVIII

### Jesus Christ, True God

*"Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God"* (*Matt.* xvi. 16).

IN EXPLAINING the second article of the Apostles' Creed we have at the very outset two things to maintain concerning Jesus Christ:

1. That He is the promised Redeemer of mankind.

2. That He is the Son of God and is Himself truly God.

We devoted our instruction last Sunday to examining into the truth of the first of these two statements, and we found that absolutely everything foretold by the prophets concerning the Messias was fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. The object of our discourse to-day will be, by considering carefully the second of these two statements, to make clear to you what it is we mean when we speak of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and true God. We are aware that every one who is in a state of grace is a child of God; but there is a great difference between Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, and the just, who are the children of God. Jesus is by nature and from all eternity the Son of God, and is of one essence and substance with the Father. The just are children of God, not by nature, nor yet from all eternity. They are made to His image and have become His children by grace. There is but

One who is the Son of God as Jesus is; therefore He is called the only-begotten Son; but a great many are children of God in the sense in which the just enjoy that title. Therefore when we say that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and true God, we mean that He is the one eternal Son of God, who is of the same essence and substance as the Father. But what tells us and how do we know that this is so? We are able to point to five different sources of evidence which bear witness to it, namely:

1. The prophecies.
2. The word of God the Father.
3. Christ's own definite statements.
4. The testimony of the apostles.
5. The teaching of the Catholic Church.

Let us now, imploring first the help of the Holy Ghost, give ourselves up to the earnest consideration of these five points.

1. The predictions of the prophets prove to us conclusively that Jesus Christ is truly God. We saw last Sunday that all things which the prophets foretold concerning the Messias under the Old Law find in Him their fulfillment. Jesus Christ is in truth the promised Redeemer. If He be the Redeemer, then Jesus Christ is entitled to all the names and appellations which the prophets give to the Redeemer. And in what words was the Redeemer described by the prophets? They termed Him "God." "God Himself will come and deliver you." They called Him "Emanuel," which means "God with us," "the all-holy," "the wonderful," the "Father of the future."

When a rich man dies having mentioned in his will only one name as successor to all his wealth, it devolves upon the new heir to prove his identity and show that he really is the person he declares himself to be. His identity once established he is in a position to lay claim to everything belonging to the deceased: money, houses, furniture, estates, anything and everything be it great or small. Once it is proved that Jesus Christ is the promised Redeemer then all the expressions made use of by the prophets in designating the Saviour apply equally to Him. He is, therefore, God—God with us—the all-holy—the wonderful—the Father of the future.

2. Next we have to consider how God the Father Himself bears witness to the divinity of Christ, and no higher testimony than His can be found either in heaven or on earth. Twice during Our Lord's public life; once at the beginning, on the occasion of His baptism in the Jordan, and once toward the close of it, at the Transfiguration, God the Father made His voice heard, saying in loud tones: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" (*Matt.* iii. 17—xvii. 5). What further proof can we consider necessary when we have such evidence as this?

3. The testimony borne by Jesus Christ to Himself is of the highest importance, and there can be no doubt that He declared Himself most explicitly to be the Son of God. "I and the Father are one" (*John* x. 30). Those who acknowledged Him as the Son of God He openly commended and rewarded, while He blamed those who refused to recognize His divinity. Peter, who He appointed

head of His Church, and to whom He gave the keys of the kingdom of heaven, said to Him: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." Questioned by Nathanael He admitted it freely and His miracles were clearly directed to manifesting it. Well, then, dearly beloved, if Jesus Christ knew Himself to be the Son of God, does it not follow that He was in very truth what He declared Himself to be? If you refuse to admit this it will not be difficult to drive you into a corner from which there will be no logical way out. Listen, and see if I am not right.

If Christ be not the Son of God, then clearly He stated what was not true, and He must have made this misstatement either knowingly or unknowingly.

If Jesus Christ was capable of deliberately stating what He knew to be untrue, what are we to think of Him? Oh, dearly beloved, I hardly dare to say it, but what can we call a man but a liar who, knowing what he says to be false, claims to be himself God. Not only is he a liar; he is a trickster, playing on our credulity in the most sacred matters; a criminal arrogating to himself divine honors; an outcast who desires to be adored as God by the whole world and for all time, although he knows he is not what he pretends to be. It might well be described as the greatest outrage ever perpetrated against human society. Can we reconcile this picture with our idea of our Saviour, with His humility, His patience, His love, His mercy, and all His virtues and infinite perfections: it is true that great virtues may exist side by side with many faults, but

that a man could be at the same time both the pattern and model of all that is perfect, and the greatest criminal and most accomplished rogue of all times, passes the limits of possibility.

Could it be that our Saviour called Himself the Son of God under a misapprehension, thinking it to be true, although such was not actually the case? What would our opinion of a man be who thought himself to be the Son of God, giving himself out as such, although in reality simply an ordinary human being? We would consider him clearly out of his mind. Can we think this of Him whose discourse so entranced the people that they remained near Him day and night in order to listen to it; of Him whose teaching, so pure, so beautiful, so holy, was more sublime than anything that this world had ever heard or will ever hear again; of Him whose word has echoed and re-echoed through the centuries believed all the world over; whose Church has endured beyond all the kingdoms of the world? Can we, I say, believe it of Him who has wrought upon this world more effectually for good than all the great philosophers put together have done? Can words so sweet, teaching so sublime, works so powerful, emanate from a madman? Are such things the outcome of a diseased brain? No, a thousand times no!

If our Saviour be not truly God then He is either a shameful impostor, or one suffering from an unfortunate delusion. Neither of these contingencies seems possible, and, moreover, they would still leave unexplained the miracles worked by Him in support of His word. If it is denied

that He is God, then He must be a mere human creature and as such would have had power to do these things only in the name and by the permission of God. But it does not seem probable either that the Almighty would forward by His co-operation the work of an impostor or that He would strengthen one mentally astray in His painful aberrations. There is but one outcome of all that we have been saying, namely, that Jesus Christ spoke the truth when He solemnly declared Himself to be the Son of God. He bore witness to the truth and sealed His testimony by His blood and death. The high priest addressed Him saying: "I adjure Thee by the living God that thou tell us if thou be Christ the Son of God" (*Matt.* xxvi. 63). There stands the Saviour of the world on the day of His death arraigned before the great council and appealed to on oath in the name of the living God. Now we will hear who He really is. What is His reply? That He is Christ the Son of God, who will sit on the right hand of the power of God and who will come again in the clouds of heaven. This is His oath; for this He is condemned to death; for bearing testimony to Himself He suffered and died.

4. What a multitude of witnesses rally round the Saviour, all of whom speak as He spoke; many of them even laying down their lives to render testimony as He had done. First we have the ranks of the holy apostles. "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God," cried Peter. "He is God, blessed forever," said St. Paul. "We know that the Son of God is come. This is the true God and life eternal," said St. John (1 *John* v. 20). What

countless unnumbered witnesses stand behind the apostles in the millions of holy martyrs, all crying out with one voice: "Jesus Christ is true God, His teaching is true, His Church is true. If He be not the Son of God, for whom have we endured heavy chains and bloody torture, and for whom have we shed our blood with so much love and joy?"

5. We have still, as the final witness to the divinity of Christ, to bring forward the Catholic Church with her saints, her popes, her bishops and priests, as well as all the pious Christians who have lived and died happy, strengthened and consoled by the blessed faith she teaches. One cry echoes through the centuries and is re-echoed in every single church and congregation, in every service, in every Christian heart: "Jesus is truly God."

We will close our meditation by devoutly praying with the Church: "I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of the Father; God of God, light of light, true God of true God; consubstantial with the Father by whom all things were made."

Let us strive earnestly ourselves to bear witness to the divinity of Christ with our hearts and lips; by our actions and in our life and death. "Every one, therefore, that shall confess Me before men I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven" (*Matt.* x. 32). Amen.

## SERMON XXXIX

### The Incarnation

*"And the Word was made flesh"* (*John* i. 14).

As soon as we begin to try and understand the second article of the Apostles' Creed we find ourselves face to face with three propositions concerning Jesus Christ: (1) that He is the promised Redeemer; (2) that He is the Son of God; (3) that He is also Our Lord. This last proposition arises out of the two first, for if Jesus Christ be truly God it follows that He is also our Creator, and if He be our Creator then He must be also our Master; for who can be considered more strictly master of a thing than he who made it? If He be our Redeemer, then it is equally true that we belong to Him; for whose property could we be if not His who dearly bought and ransomed us, paying for us the price of His most precious blood?

To-day we propose to continue our study of the Apostles' Creed and will pass on to the third article: "Who was conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary," words which again lead us to the consideration of the person of Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God.

Placing ourselves first under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, let us endeavor to keep before our minds in a special manner the two following points:

I. The two-fold nature of Jesus Christ.
II. The unity of the person of Jesus Christ.

I

"How was the Son of God made man?" "The Son of God was conceived and made man by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary." These are the words in which the catechism makes known to us the mystery of the Incarnation, and it is our object today to endeavor to grasp clearly the sense in which they are to be understood. You remember that at the marriage feast of Cana water was changed into wine. As soon as the change had been effected the water disappeared; it had become non-existent. Did the same thing happen when God became man; did He, in becoming man, cease to be God? No. He was both God and man; and becoming man He remained God. The Son of God took to Himself the nature of man and united it to Himself, wrapping Himself round as it were in human flesh as in a garment. If a king chose to clothe himself in the rags of a beggar and travel from door to door begging his bread, it would be correct to say that a king had made himself into a beggar. Now this is precisely the sense in which the Son of God took to Himself our human nature.

Human nature consists of two essential but distinct parts, the material body and the spiritual soul. When the Son of God assumed our human nature He took a veritable human body. (Read what the Scriptures record concerning Jesus Christ.) A body which received birth in the natural way, which was able to experience hunger, thirst, and fatigue, which ate and drank, suffered and bled, and which underwent the pangs

of death, must be surely a veritable human body. In taking flesh the Son of God became possessed also of a human soul like ours. He Himself alludes to His soul: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death" (*Matt.* xxvi. 38). "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit" (*Luke* xxiii. 46). His soul was liable to all the various emotions and changes of human tempers and passions: to joy, sorrow, repugnance, fear, anxiety, yearning, longing, and desire! A veritable human soul.

The mystery of the Incarnation is nowhere more beautifully expressed than in those words of St. John's which we repeat every day in the Angelus: "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us" (*John* i. 14). "The Word" is the second person of the Godhead, the Son of God, and "the flesh" is our human nature. What a mystery of omnipotence is the Incarnation, for how incomprehensibly great must that power be that could join in a union so close, so intimate, so indissoluble, things so wide asunder as the divine and the human nature. Moreover, that the Son of God should have come down from His heavenly throne and be born into this vale of tears, to live and suffer and die, is a mystery of mercy and condescension revealing unfathomable heights and depths of goodness. If any one were to suggest to a man accustomed to live surrounded by the comforts and luxuries of life that he should, even for one single hour, dress himself in the garb of a beggar and wander from street to street, and from door to door, he would indignantly refuse to comply with such an outrageous proposal; and yet it would be only for a short time, and he

would not be required to adopt a nature other than his own. If the world considers it fitting to commemorate the memory of its great men as year by year the dates of their birth and death recur; if the anniversaries of notable battles and victories are celebrated with national pride; surely the least that Christians can do is to solemnize day by day and every day the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God. "And the word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us."

Although Jesus Christ really and truly assumed our human nature, nevertheless humanity in Him was distinguished by glorious privileges. His soul was filled with a measure of sanctifying grace beyond that which would be possible for any other human soul to contain. He was in perpetual enjoyment of the Beatific Vision of God; such was the enlightenment of His mind that although as a man He was not omniscient He possessed a degree of knowledge so great, so extensive, so clear, so accurate, that the learning of all creatures put together pales and becomes insignificant before it. The human will of Christ was incapable of sin. It was sinless and was in complete union with the divine and eternal will of God.

In Christ, therefore, there are two natures—the divine because He is God, the human because He is man—so that He is at the same time true God and true man. He has been God from all eternity, but man only from the time of His Incarnation.

II

We have now to consider (and this is the sec-

ond point of our meditation) if there be two persons in Jesus Christ.

The catechism asks: "Is Jesus Christ more than one divine person?" "No, Jesus Christ is but one divine person." If there were in Jesus Christ two persons, a divine person and a human person, what would be the result? We would have to admit that His sufferings and death could affect only His human person, and that being so it was only a man who suffered and died for us, and we are not redeemed. To go further we could not even say that God had become man, but only that He became closely and intimately connected with man. Now the truth is very different: The Son of God took to Himself our human nature in such a manner that it became His own, and we are able to speak of the hands and feet and body of the Son of God; of His soul, His heart, His blood. Jesus Christ spoke of Himself as both divine and human. "I and the Father are one" (*John* x. 30). "I am the resurrection and the life" (*John* xi. 25). He also speaks of Himself as the Son of God.

There being in Jesus Christ only one person, the person of God the Son, what then, we pause to ask, is the Blessed Virgin Mary? To her belongs a dignity and a height of glory unattainable to men or angels, that of Mother of God. What an honor to be the Mother of God. It would seem as though her divine Son, while humiliating Himself beyond our understanding, took pleasure in exalting to an unspeakable degree her whom he had chosen as His mother. In what relation did St. Joseph stand to Mary and Jesus? He was

the Virgin spouse of Mary, the protector and guardian of Jesus. How sublime a mission was that of being intrusted with the care of the Son of God! In confiding it to St. Joseph God gave him a high proof of His confidence. If a rich man of business were to allow any one of his young clerks in his office to handle the key of his safe, it would be a proof of the favorable opinion he had formed of the youth's integrity; but, in proportion, as the love he feels for his children is greater than his love of money, so much more does he honor the man to whom he entrusts the education of his son. What, then, must have been the confidence almighty God felt in St. Joseph, when He gave His only-begotten Son in tenderest infancy with His holy Mother into his charge. We know with what fidelity St. Joseph requited and justified that confidence. No wonder that the Vicar of Christ has placed the whole Catholic Church in a special way under the protection of St. Joseph.

In considering the third article of the Creed we find these three names, Jesus, Mary, Joseph, closely interwoven as co-operating in the mystery of the Incarnation. Jesus the Son of God made man—Mary, His Mother, from whom He vouchsafed to take his sacred humanity, and St. Joseph, His protector and foster-father. Oh, let us reverence and try to imitate the Holy Family. Let us have constantly on our lips the words: Jesus, Mary, Joseph, I give you my heart and my soul; Jesus, Mary, Joseph, assist me in my last agony; Jesus, Mary, Joseph, may I breathe forth my soul in peace in your holy company. Amen.

## SERMON XL

### The Sufferings of Christ

*"And He is the propitiation of our sins, and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world"* (1 *John* ii. 2).

Having contemplated in former instructions the mystery of the Incarnation, fully considering the two-fold nature in one divine person of Jesus Christ, we should now, if we were to follow the course outlined by the catechism, study first the hidden life at Nazareth and next the public life, teaching, and miracles of our Saviour. But in view of the fact that Sunday by Sunday portions of this part of the Gospel are read to you from the altar, and that you have constant opportunities of hearing sermons explaining the text, we think our present purpose will best be served by passing on at once to the sufferings of Christ, taking the words of the fourth article of the Creed: "Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried," by which we enter on the last period of Our Lord's life. It is in no way my intention to describe to you in full all the separate details of our Saviour's passion. This is done for your benefit at different periods of the year, notably at the season of Lent. My desire at present is to bring home to you in some measure the infinite magnitude of the divine sufferings, and it will help us to attain this end if we endeavor, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to realize as far as in us lies:

I. Who it was that suffered.
II. What the sufferings were.
III. The manner in which they were borne.
IV. What the fruit of these sufferings has been.

I

The magnitude of Christ's sufferings becomes manifest when viewed in connection with the person of the sufferer. The damned suffer in hell, but they suffer justly, for they revolted against God. The holy souls suffer in purgatory, but they too have deserved punishment and have need of purification. Men suffer here on earth; sorrow is the portion of mankind in this vale of tears. But in the person of Jesus it was the Son of God, the embodiment of innocence and holiness, the Lord and Creator of all things that suffered. In time of war the rank and file of the soldiery have to undergo the privation and hardships incidental to the lot of a soldier; and however much we may admire their endurance we would admire still more the heroism of the king himself, the head of the whole army, if he were to associate and identify himself with these sufferings, embracing them voluntarily in his own person. In this latter case the suffering is of immeasurably higher value. Oh, the magnitude of the sufferings of Christ, the Son of God, who was crucified and died for us! You may reply, that after all Jesus Christ did not suffer in His divine nature, but only in His human nature. That is true. The divine nature is as incapable of suffering as of death, but it is equally true that His human nature belonged to the person of the Son of God.

It was the body and the soul of the Son of God; the pains, the wounds, the sufferings, the death pangs were those of the Son of God; so, we may rightly say, the Son of God suffered, the Son of God died.

II

The depth of suffering which Christ our Lord underwent for our sake is brought home to us very forcibly when we consider in themselves the pains which He endured. All through His life He was never free from suffering, and suffering of such an order that its like has never been experienced on this earth. I will not ask you to trace step by step the weary road of poverty, toil, and prayer, which our Saviour humbly traveled here below. I want to emphasize one thing only: namely, that His passion was ever present to Him, that the cross was the central point of all His thoughts. If He foresaw our life and our death, He foresaw also His own, for He was omniscient and had foretold His passion. Trouble that is foreseen clearly and distinctly presses on the soul in anticipation. When a mother hears from a doctor that a beloved child has only a few weeks or a few months longer to live, every look at her darling cuts her to the heart, reminding her of the death-struggle, the coffin, the grave that are drawing nearer and nearer. Not a single hour or day of our Saviour's life was free from pain and suffering. "My sorrow is continually before Me" (*Ps.* xxxvii. 18).

It may be urged that the actual passion of our Saviour was compressed into a few hours. Yet,

consider what a road of agony he traveled in that short space of time: from the Garden of Gethsemani stained with His sweat of blood, to the house of the high priest; from the high priest to Pilate; from Pilate to Herod, and back again to Pilate, who sent Him, laden with His Cross, to Calvary and to death; His way was lined with enemies on all sides, priests and people, Pagans and Jews, men of high and low degree: "Many are they who rise up against Me" (*Ps.* iii. 2). How manifold were His pains, how numerous were His wounds, how cruel the blows with which He was struck, how great His loss of blood! There was no member of His body, no power of His soul, that did not suffer.

If viewed only from the outside, so to speak, His sufferings are heavy beyond all question, but, in addition to and before everything else, we have to take into account the inward desolation of His soul. To this desolation His friends and His apostles who forsook Him greatly contributed; and it was increased further by the cruelty of His enemies, who, not satisfied with tormenting and torturing Him, mocked and jeered at His anguish. At the thought of the many souls for whom all His sufferings would not only be in vain, but would constitute even a further occasion of sin, this desolation welled up in His heart like a deep spring whose bitterness was but further increased by the thought of His heavenly Father, for by Him, too, He felt Himself forsaken. Oh, the intensity of the sufferings of Christ! Added to this we have to remember that the sacred humanity of Christ was in the highest degree sensitive and

sensible. When a war breaks out, swords are polished and sharpened with special care; their whole virtue lying in their capacity to cut. Our Saviour, assuming our human nature with the one object and purpose of suffering and dying, chose to take to Himself, with such an end in view, a body and soul with an organization peculiarly adapted for suffering.

III

Not only are the sufferings of Christ great in themselves, their magnitude is increased and enhanced by the manner in which they were embraced and endured. Our Saviour suffered voluntarily. He said: "Not my will, but Thine be done." At the first appearance of His enemies who had come to apprehend Him, advancing toward them He asked, "Whom seek ye?" and when they answering said, "Jesus of Nazareth," He at once declared Himself: "I am He" (*John* xviii. 6). As He spoke these words, in order as it seemed to convince them that the Son of God was subject to no creature against His will, He allowed His almighty power to overcome them, suffering them to fall helpless and impotent to the ground.

His life was one of devoted patience, meekness, and holiness; it was full of strength and resoluteness, and was inspired and animated by the love of God, obedience to the heavenly Father, and love of mankind. Adorned with every virtue, it is the model and example of lives for all time, teaching us that patient suffering is beautiful and lovable, worthy to be admired and imitated; fill-

ing our hearts with love and sympathy and making the patient endurance of pain meritorious and precious in the sight of God and men.

IV

We would have learned but very imperfectly the lessons taught us by the life of Christ if we failed to estimate the fruit of His sufferings. "Why did Christ suffer and die?" asks the catechism. "Christ suffered and died for our sins." The great and wonderful result of the passion of Christ is that it atoned for the sins of the whole world.

We speak of atonement only when there has been some offense, some insult to be made good, and in every single sin that has ever been committed insult has been offered and offense given to the great Law-giver, the high and eternal Judge. When insult has been offered to any one reparation is demanded and exacted, and almighty God demanded complete and full reparation, such reparation as amply compensated Him for the glory of which He was robbed by sin, making good the offense given Him, and completely restoring the honor due to Him. The greatness of the reparation must bear some proportion to the status of the person to whom it is offered, and how is an offense against the majesty of almighty God to be measured? To deal a child a blow in the face is a rupture of the peace, and to strike a judge is a criminal offense, but so to treat the majesty of a king would be high treason. On a certain occasion a captain of the French troops struck Pope Boniface VIII a

blow in the face with his mailed hand and the whole of Christendom rang with indignation and horror at such an act. Now, what is sin? It is an offense against the infinite majesty of God and calls for reparation and atonement of an infinite order. Who is to afford to God this reparation? We are but weak men; sinners ourselves and finite beings; how can we repair an infinite wrong? The angels and the holy Mother of God herself, innocent and pure though they be, are but finite creatures and as such could not restore to the infinite God the honor He had lost.

But Jesus Christ, at one and the same time true God and true man, could do it. As head of the whole human race He could offer in our name full and complete satisfaction for the sins of the world, by suffering whatever the heavenly Father required of Him: "Obedient unto death; even to the death of the cross" (*Philipp.* ii. 8). His sufferings furnished a complete atonement which, vicariously offered, fully satisfied the divine justice. As the Saviour lay dying on the cross the shameful chains laid by the evil spirit upon men were loosened; as His precious blood flowed from His sacred wounds the terrible flames of hell were extinguished.

The sufferings of Christ atoned, not only completely, but superabundantly, to the divine justice: "With Him there is plentiful redemption" (*Ps.* cxxix. 7). They have won for us all graces; they have restored us to the position of children of God, and opened once more the gates of heaven so long closed against us.

Our Saviour's sufferings were bitter indeed, but

to us they are of unspeakable value. Who can estimate the evil they have overcome, or count the blessings which have flowed from them? Never has a tree borne fruit so sweet, so precious as the tree of the holy cross.

Because Christ endured His passion for all and each one of us have we, then, all a right to consider ourselves saved and blessed? By no means. There remains something for us to do, which some of us are apt to neglect. If we want to have part in the redemption of Christ we must believe in the Saviour, in His divinity, in His love, His sufferings and merits, fixing in this way all our hopes in Him and His sacred passion. We must gather for ourselves the fruit of the cross, by using with contrite and grateful hearts, and in the spirit of penance and humility, the means of salvation placed in our hands by our Saviour in the holy Sacraments; and earnestly try to follow Him by walking in His footsteps. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me" (*Matt.* xvi. 24). How blessed is he who thus reaps the fruit of the sufferings of Christ! How truly miserable is that soul who, in spite of the grace of God, goes to perdition; it is as though, standing by a fresh spring of water, he were to die of thirst. I thank Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, that Thou hast died for me. May I never deserve to forfeit the merits of Thy precious blood, and of Thy infinite sufferings. Amen.

## SERMON XLI

### The Descent of Christ into Hell

*"He descended into hell."*

From the fourth article of the Apostles' Creed, which we considered last week, we now pass on to the fifth: "He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead." This article can be divided into two distinct parts: First, the descent into hell—"He descended into hell"; second, the resurrection—"the third day He rose again from the dead."

We will make the first part the subject of our discourse to-day, considering with the help of the Holy Spirit what actually took place after the death of our Saviour.

I. What happened to His sacred body.
II. What happened to His soul.

I

In our last meditation we followed Our Lord in His sufferings up to that moment when at His death upon the cross, His soul, obedient to the laws of our human nature, left His sacred body. It would be a mistake to think that at this point the divinity of Christ forsook either His body or His soul; on the contrary it remained united to both soul and body, which continued to be after death, as in life, the soul and the body of the Son of God.

Let us now inquire what became of the body of Christ after death.

(*a*) Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus obtained permission from Pilate to take the lifeless body of Jesus down from the cross, and, having done so, they laid it in the arms of His afflicted mother. That the mother of Jesus really received her Son into her embrace after death is not recorded in the Gospel; but surely it seems natural to believe that she who had been so cruelly divided from Him at the moment of His death would wish to clasp Him once more to her heart. Christians have at all times felt this, and we see in every country, indeed almost in every church, representations of the Mother of Sorrows sunk in grief and in tears at the foot of the cross and gazing upon the lifeless body of her Son which she holds in her arms. This picture tells us how to bear the loss of those who have been torn from us by death. Sorrow is not forbidden; we are allowed to weep and mourn for them, but in the midst of our suffering and tears we should recall the thought of the Mother of Sorrows to console and strengthen us. Her loss was more than ours. Her suffering was greater, but in the depth of her grief she remained an example of resignation, self-sacrifice, and fortitude.

(*b*) Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus anointed the sacred body, as was customary in the East, with sweet spices and wrapped it in a cloth of finely spun pure linen of rare and beautiful texture. What could be precious enough to envelop the body of the Son of God? Nothing in the whole world. In the same way nothing can be too costly

or too precious for us to give, or sacrifice, if it enables us to preserve and retain in our souls the Son of God when He comes to us in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. How pure should be the body, the tongue, the heart, the soul that becomes even momentarily the resting-place of the body of Christ in holy communion!

(*c*) The sacred body was laid in a grave near at hand, which was new, and in which no man had ever yet been placed.

The tomb is the scene of the final and greatest humiliation of our Saviour. His whole life on earth had been one of humiliation and abasement, but at every step the light of His divinity had pierced through the clouds which obscured it. Over the manger shone forth the marvelous star; side by side with the lowliness of His life we have the wonder of His miracles; at the ignominy of the cross the earth shook, rocks were rent asunder, and the sun refused to give its light. But in the tomb every ray of glory seemed to be hidden, and the God-made man becomes nothing more than a lifeless corpse to be lifted and carried about and disposed of at the will of others. The only parallel to this humiliation is to be found in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, where the Son of God is really present under the lowly semblance of bread and wine, and allows Himself to be lifted up by human hands, carried from place to place, and used by men as they think fit. What an example of humility.

II

We have seen what God permitted to take place after our Saviour's death as far as His sacred

body was concerned. If we now turn to the consideration of the words, "He descended into hell," we shall learn from them what became of His divine soul, when, in accordance with the laws of nature, it forsook the body. The catechism seeks to make the meaning of the words, "He descended into hell," clear to us by asking, "Did Christ's soul descend into the hell of the damned?" The answer given is: "The hell into which Christ's soul descended was not the hell of the damned, but a place or state of rest called limbo, where the souls of the just were waiting for Him." The body was in the grave, the soul descended into limbo. We will explain this answer of the catechism bit by bit, considering the nature of this place called limbo, who they were who there awaited Christ, and with what object He descended into it.

Limbo is not to be confused with the hell of the damned, for out of that hell there is no salvation, whereas the inhabitants of limbo were released from their captivity. Neither is it to be confounded with purgatory, which is a state of punishment and suffering. Limbo was not punishment. Moreover, it is in its character very distinct from heaven, to which the souls in limbo were admitted as soon as they were set free.

If limbo, however, is neither hell, nor heaven, nor purgatory, what can it be? It is yet another place or state which can not be further described. It was there that those souls who had departed this life in a state of grace and had already atoned for and been purified from their sins, were detained, and that the saints of the Old Testament

waited and longed for heaven. There was sorrow in that place only in so far as "hope that is deferred afflicteth the soul" (*Prov.* xiii. 12). Gathered together there were the souls of all the just who died before Christ, from Adam down to the penitent thief whom Jesus promised to meet in limbo when He said to him, "This day thou shalt be with Me in paradise" (*Luke* xxiii. 43).

For what reason, think you, were these souls, already ripe for heaven, kept waiting centuries and centuries before they were suffered to take possession of it? Because it was only fit and proper that none should enter heaven before our Saviour; that the conqueror should show the way, the head before the members, the real Son before the adopted children; that the new Adam should Himself lead the whole human race to glory. It would have been in the nature of things in the highest degree unseemly, that the prize and recompense of eternal life should have been awarded while Jesus Christ had yet to pay on the cross the price of His precious blood.

"Why did Christ descend into limbo?" "Christ descended into limbo to preach to the souls who were in prison; that is, to announce to them the joyful tidings of their redemption." Yes, it was to bring this news that Christ descended into limbo, to tell those expectant souls that the labor of salvation was accomplished, the Prince of this world overcome, the justice of God satisfied, and the gates of heaven open! What must have been the feelings of consolation and happiness with which these blessed tidings were received? We can picture to ourselves with what manifestations

of joy and thankfulness the whole host of the just knelt in adoration before the Saviour. We can hear the words of burning gratitude and love poured out by Adam prostrate at the divine feet of his Lord: "O Thou second and new and heavenly Adam! Through my fault the whole human race fell into sin; by Thy death has it been rescued from this state. I thank Thee, not only for myself, but for all my children. Eternity will not be long enough to repay by praise and love my debt of gratitude." And Abel, the Son of Adam: "Hail to Thee, whose death, yet more bloody and unmerited than my own, sent up Thy blood to heaven, crying not for vengeance, but for mercy and pardon." And Noah: "I have seen the flood-gates of heaven open to punish the world. But these floods, great and powerful as they were, did not suffice to cleanse the world from sin. How much more efficacious has been the blood which flowed from Thy sacred wounds!" Let us listen to the last of all the patriarchs and prophets, St. John the Baptist: "On earth I called Thee the Lamb of God who takest away the sins of the world, and now as we meet beyond the world I say again, behold the Lamb of God, behold Him by whom the sins of the world have been taken away." Yet another soul presses forward, that of the penitent thief: "Thanks be to Thee, O Lord, that Thou wast mindful of me! All praise to Thee in that paradise which Thou promised and hast given me." With one voice all unite in adoring and giving praise to the Saviour: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; because He hath visited and hath wrought the redemption of His

people'' (*Luke* i. 68). The Saviour, having announced the redemption to the just in limbo, He consoled them and set them free, and led them Himself to the joy of heaven, manifesting His power and His glory.

Is there any lesson for us in this descent of our Saviour into hell? Surely there is. After His death our Redeemer hastened to go to the aid of the souls of the just. There is no reason against our holding the belief that He also visited the souls in purgatory to console and encourage them. We will also descend in thought into this lower world, by praying for the holy souls in purgatory, and in this way consoling them and furthering their deliverance.

Finally, let us not fail to visit even hell in our thoughts. There let us contemplate those who have mocked at the virtue of the blood of Christ, and who will never hear the word that set them free. They at least will teach us to repent and do penance while there is yet time: ''Remember thy last end, O man, and thou shalt never sin!'' Amen.

## SERMON XLII

### The Resurrection

*"The third day He rose again from the dead"*

WE HAVE considered our Saviour's descent into hell, and we now turn to the contemplation of His glorious Resurrection, that great truth in which we express our belief when we say these words of the Apostles' Creed: "The third day He rose again from the dead." The instruction which we propose to give you to-day on this most important subject can be divided into three heads, namely:

I. The number of witnesses that testify to the truth of the Resurrection.

II. The weakness of the objections that are urged against it.

III. The enormous significance which the fact of the Resurrection bears.

We will, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, begin by considering briefly and devoutly the two first of these headings.

The Resurrection is an event which came to pass many hundreds of years ago in a distant country on the other side of the world. We are always desirous in the case of any important occurrence to fix the exact date at which it took place, and in this case we learn from the Apostles' Creed that Christ rose again on the third day after His death: "The third day He rose again from the dead." Christ rose, therefore, as it

were, before His time, not delaying or putting off His resurrection till the day of the general rising from the dead, but, on the contrary, hastening it in order that His sacred body should not long remain in contact with the dust of the earth; He did this to confirm and strengthen our faith and supply us with a type and figure of our own resurrection. On the other hand He delayed it for three days that it might be evident beyond any doubt that He was really dead, and that incontrovertible proof of the genuineness of the Resurrection might be established. So it was a resurrection anticipated and yet delayed, and which, taking place on the third day, fulfilled the figure given of it by Jonas, and made true our Saviour's own prophecies concerning it. What evidence, then, have we that Jesus in truth rose again from the dead and that this event really came to pass, as we are told it did? We know it first of all from the testimony of the apostles and disciples. It is always to eye-witnesses that one looks for the confirmation of any great event. Their evidence is accepted in a court of law as proof positive all the world over. "In the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall stand" (*Deut.* xix. 15). But as a matter of fact the apostles and disciples can not be said to have been eye-witnesses of the resurrection of Christ. At best the only people who could be said to have been actually present were the guards and the soldiers; and yet we are quite justified in quoting the apostles and disciples as bearing testimony to it, because they looked with their own eyes upon the living Saviour after they had known Him to be

dead and buried. If you met this morning here in the street a friend whom you had yesterday seen off on the train, you could confidently assert that your friend had returned from his journey. Now just think what numbers of different people saw the risen Saviour! He was seen by the two disciples going to Emmaus, and the same evening he appeared to the assembled apostles in Jerusalem. Thomas was absent, so a week later He came to them once more, Thomas being then present. He was seen by seven apostles on the Lake of Genesareth, and later on by five hundred disciples on a mountain in Galilee. Finally, He was with the assembled apostles and disciples in Jerusalem before He ascended into heaven from the Mount of Olives under the eyes of numerous witnesses.

You will admit that there is an abundance of reliable testimony furnished by witnesses, all of whom had known the Saviour intimately, having lived with Him in close and constant intercourse; every feature and line of His sacred face was fresh in their memory, every tone of His voice was familiar to them. His most sacred wounds gave them the means of identifying Him with infallible accuracy as the same, whose death on the cross they had witnessed. Men as well as women saw Him, not only in the dusk of evening, but in the clear light of day, and that not once, but repeatedly; and they not only saw Him, but they talked with Him, ate with Him, and touched Him. Many of them were far from being ready and inclined to be credulous; some were skeptical and hard to convince, like Thomas: "Unless I put

my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe'' (*John* xx. 25). Thomas meant, in other words, that unless he could with his hands find proof that it was our Saviour he refused to believe it. Another important witness is St. Paul, who, enemy of Christ and persecutor of the Church, became transformed by the sudden appearance of the risen Christ into one of His most zealous disciples. ''And last of all He was seen by me also'' (1 *Cor.* xv. 8). Without a doubt witnesses are plentiful enough.

What character do these various witnesses bear? Did they give their evidence in confused and hesitating language, in broken and disjointed sentences, retreating to some distant country to tell their story where no one could contradict them, or reserving it for the ears of friends who would not pain them by showing up their delusions? Quite the contrary. The apostles after the Holy Ghost was come upon them preached with great power and strength concerning the Resurrection of the Lord in the presence of His enemies, His accusers, His murderers, in the very city where He had been put to death but a few weeks before, and which contained His grave. Openly and to their faces He said: ''Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, whom you by the hands of wicked men have crucified and slain . . . this Jesus hath God raised again, whereof we are all witnesses'' (*Acts* ii. 22-32). Do you perhaps suggest that these were picked witnesses and merely deceitful and self-interested men? Such a thing has never even been hinted. They had no reward to hope for from the world;

they expected and looked for nothing but what they received, namely, ridicule, contempt, and persecution, toil and labor, martyrdom and death. Eternal life was the reward they hoped for, and this they would have forfeited had they been impostors trying to deceive their fellow-men. It seems clearly established, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that witnesses to the Resurrection are so numerous and so unanimous that it would be unreasonable not to accept their testimony.

When we consider and examine into the objections urged against the truth of the Resurrection their weakness and unreality seem but to strengthen our position and make more sure the foundation on which our belief rests. These objections, broadly speaking, may be reduced to two:

First, it has been alleged that Christ did not really die. Under the appearance of death He was taken down from the cross and buried, and in the grave He revived and arose, so that no resurrection from the dead ever took place at all. But the words of the Saviour Himself: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit" (*Luke* xxiii. 46), are the cry of one at the last extremity. The Gospel thus describes Him: "And bowing His head He gave up the ghost" (*John* xix. 30). Then we have the piercing of the divine side by the sharp lance of the soldier, in order that the least spark of life which might still flicker in the sacred body might be extinguished. When Joseph of Arimathea craved permission from Pilate to take Our Lord down from the cross Pilate first of all made inquiries to ascertain if He were really dead.

Had he not been sure that death had taken place he would never have given the permission so eagerly sought. The holy Mother of our Saviour held Him in her arms after the descent from the cross; would she have consented to see Him consigned to the tomb if she had felt the least doubt that death had really taken place? No, a thousand times no! Christ not only appeared to be dead; He was so actually and in truth: "He was crucified, dead, and buried."

The second objection, while allowing that Christ did really die, refuses to admit that He ever rose again. Now if He did not rise again what became of His sacred body? His enemies had power over the tomb of Jesus, and it was sealed, watched, and guarded. The soldiers were instructed by the high priests and the pharisees to say, "His body has been stolen away by His disciples, who were bribed with money to spread this rumor abroad. Say you His disciples came by night and stole Him away when you were asleep?" (*Matt.* xxviii. 13.) How could such a thing be possible in view of the fact that armed soldiers guarded the tomb? Now for a Roman guard to sleep at his post would have meant punishment by death, and in this case we are asked to believe that not only one, but the whole guard fell asleep at the same time, and that so soundly that they were not roused by the rolling away of the stone, and the lifting up, and removing the sacred body. To give any appearance of likelihood to this story we must suppose that all these improbable things happened, and it would be strange indeed if so many unlikely things had followed so closely one upon the other. More-

over, can we fancy the timid disciples finding courage for such a daring undertaking? How could they know the guards would be asleep? But, even conceding every point, admitting black to be white, and making the impossible possible, what would the disciples do with a dead body on their hands which they must find some way of concealing?

Dearly beloved brethren, those who bear witness in proof of the Resurrection are so numerous, and their veracity so absolutely to be trusted, while, on the other hand, the objections adduced against it are so weak, paltry, and far-fetched, that nothing remains for us but to say with the angel: "He is risen!" It is a fact as well authenticated and as firmly established as any in history.

May it be to us all a source of joy, and let us pray, saying in the words of the Apostles' Creed, "the third day He rose again from the dead." Amen.

## SERMON XLIII

### The Resurrection

*"The third day He rose again from the dead"*

OUR Saviour's resurrection—a fact founded on proof so reliable and convincing that all objections urged against it are utterly valueless—is an event full of the deepest significance for us. Strengthening as it does our faith in the divinity of our Saviour, and giving us the certain hope that we, too, will one day rise again, it should also greatly stimulate us to lead a life of holiness and virtue. Let us implore the help of the Holy Spirit, that we may during this meditation realize in some measure the three-fold manner in which the Resurrection has power to influence the lives of each one of us individually. It should

I. Strengthen our faith.
II. Secure our hopes.
III. Incite us to holiness of life.

I

It is not difficult to see that the more closely we study the full meaning of the Resurrection the stronger should be our faith. In the course of His life on earth Christ constantly claimed and put forward that He was the Son of God, and by countless miracles proved that He was so in truth. But the last and strongest evidence of His divinity, the most striking proof of it, is to be

found in the Resurrection. While on earth He had said: "I shall be delivered into the hands of My enemies; they will destroy Me, but in three days I will rise again." Friends and enemies alike knew that He had spoken in this way, and after His death they awaited in suspense and expectation the third day, to see if, really rising again, He would make good what He had said. And He did. This fact is beyond question, and from it the truth shines forth that He was indeed the Son of God. Can an impostor raise himself from the grave, or would God have used His almighty power to uphold a liar and a cheat, strengthening his hands by causing him to rise from the dead, and so enabling him to carry on his course of fraud?

It follows that if Christ be the Son of God His teaching must be true and that we can not follow it too closely or believe it too firmly. It follows further that the Church founded by Christ is the Church of the living God to be clung to with every fiber of our being, that the sacraments really afford us the means of salvation, and as the food of our souls are to be used constantly with the greatest love and devotion. In a word, as St. Paul has pointed out in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, the whole truth and meaning of our faith rests upon the Resurrection: "And if Christ be not risen again your faith is vain" (1 *Cor.* xv. 17). It must equally be the case that if Christ be really risen from the dead, then is our blessed faith in its smallest part and detail founded in truth upon a rock—the rock of Christ.

II

This same great event by which our faith is so wonderfully strengthened and invigorated must have an influence of equal value on our hope, concentrating and confirming it in its very root and essence. For do not the promises of Christ, in which our dearest aspirations and longings are centered, form the sum and substance of our expectations as Christians? And what has Christ promised us? Another and a better life after death, the resurrection of the body at the last day, an eternity of happiness. These are wonderful promises, but is He able to keep them? Will He fulfill them? In view of His own glorious resurrection every doubt must vanish. If He is able to do the one, can He not do the other? If, being dead, He has power to bring Himself gloriously to life on the third day, will it, living, be difficult for Him to raise us up at the last day? He foretold that He would rise again on the third day, and, appearing to His apostles, go before them into Galilee—and He kept His word. Can we doubt that He will remember His promise to us, not only raising us up at the appointed term, but raising us up glorified, to dwell with Him in heaven for all eternity? What does the apostle St. Paul say? "It is sown in corruption, it shall rise in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor, it shall rise in glory; it is sown in weakness, it shall rise in power; it is sown a natural body, it shall rise a spiritual body" (1 *Cor.* xv. 42-44), and, dearly beloved brethren, if we first contemplate the body of the risen Saviour, and then turn to consider our own poor bodies, what a contrast and

difference. The one possessed of light and brightness, immortality, youth, and beauty; the other with the gloom and darkness of the grave staring it in the face, certain death advancing to meet it, the decay of old age, the horrors of dissolution awaiting it. Incorruption instead of corruption, strength and unfailing youth in place of weakness, sorrow, pain, and old age. What does a little suffering matter when we know that we will rise again and that Christ will, as St. Paul says: "Reform the body of our lowness made like to the body of His glory" (*Philipp.* iii. 21). What reality, what comfort, what confidence our hope gathers at the thought of the Resurrection of the Lord! Though it is true that all things here below are perishable, that the body is subject to infirmity and decay, becoming defaced by the hand of time, ravaged by disease, destroyed by death, and that its last remains crumble to dust a prey to corruption, why should we be frightened? As surely as dawned the first Easter Day, as surely as this present day has dawned for each one of us, so certainly will the day come when our Saviour will awaken us, and transform the body of our lowness, making it like to the body of His glory in unfading brightness, in youth that does not grow old, in strength that knows no weakness, in supernatural beauty transcending all things, in life that is eternal.

III

The Resurrection of Christ is full of beautiful meaning as regards the inner and moral life of each one of us. St. Paul puts it before us as a

type of our own spiritual renewal when he says: "As Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life" (*Rom.* vi. 4). It is typical of a complete change of heart, not only in its completeness, but also with regard to the characteristics of such a change, and the difficulties with which its accomplishment is invariably beset.

It particularly illustrates the difficulties and obstacles which line the path of one who is really struggling to reform his heart and life. What seemed more impossible than that Christ should rise again? He was dead, having received countless wounds, any one of which was sufficient to be a death-blow. The lance had opened His divine side; His blood had been shed in torrents; He had endured a protracted death agony of excruciating pain. There was the hard rock of the grave, with the enormous stone sealed by the authorities to close the opening; the armed guard consisting of numerous soldiers, watching and ready if needs be to defend it. All these things seemed to be insurmountable obstacles. But nothing is insurmountable to the power of God, and with the very first stirring of His coming to life they all fell away: "Nor bolt, nor grave, nor seal, nor stone, nor rock can withstand Him."

There are people in this world of whom we can say that their state presents obstacles to the divine grace of such a nature that a change of heart seems, humanly speaking, impossible. They are dead to all that concerns their spiritual life, with not one, but who knows how many mortal sins upon their soul? These are the wounds;

the bondage of passion formed by the habits of years is, as it were, the hard rock of the grave which has closed round them holding them as in a prison. The guard is also on the alert, namely, the evil companions, the participators of their life of sin, who oppose every step in the direction of conversion. But great as these obstacles are they will not prevent regeneration of heart if the sinner, allowing himself to be carried on the tide of divine grace, breaks all bonds and exclaims, "By the mercy of God I will begin a new life."

The Resurrection of Christ is a type not of conversion only, but of a complete and entire conversion. For how did Our Lord appear after He was risen? With the self-same body that had been torn and beaten, racked, covered with stripes and blood, one wound from head to foot; but now become beautiful and pure, streaming with heavenly light, giving joy to all who looked upon Him. Before mortal, now immortal: "Christ, rising from the dead, dieth no more; death shall no more have dominion over Him" (*Rom.* vi. 9). So can the sinner rise from his sins, the same, yet different; where formerly he was sluggish and dilatory he can now be fervent and diligent; without good works, where he now abounds in acts of love of God and of his neighbor; before always ready to fall back and degenerate, but now steadfast in resisting the old sins, the old habits, the old passions.

Although the change which took place in the Saviour through His Resurrection was so great, His sacred body still retained certain marks of its former condition. The five sacred wounds, though

streaming with radiance greater than that of the brightest star, were still proofs that it was the self-same body that had hung on the cross and lain in the grave. So the sinner, though rising to a new and a better life, still bears about him the imprint of his former sins; not indeed that he may reproduce them, but in order that he may grow more and more contrite and watchful, that he may learn to weep and do penance, becoming ever increasingly penetrated with a sense of the mercy of God in proportion as he recedes further from the abyss out of which he has been rescued.

O blessed Resurrection! What help thou givest us! What power of faith, what strength and security of hope, what an example of a new and holy life! "As Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life" (*Rom.* vi. 4). Amen.

## SERMON XLIV

### The Ascension

*"He ascended into heaven, sitteth at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty"*

After His death the soul of our Saviour Jesus Christ descended into limbo; on the third day His sacred body rose triumphantly from the grave; and forty days later He ascended, body and soul, gloriously into heaven. In contemplating to-day with you the great mystery of the Ascension I propose dividing my instruction into two heads, and will consider, with the help of the Holy Spirit:

I. The Ascension as a fact.
II. The Ascension in its object.

I

That our Saviour did actually ascend into heaven is a fact based on authority fully as reliable as that on which we hold the truth of the Resurrection. The Scriptures bear testimony to the two events, and in the Apostles' Creed, the most ancient and best known of all the forms of creed, we profess our faith in both mysteries. One follows immediately upon the other: "He rose again from the dead . . . He ascended into heaven." Surely if our Saviour was powerful enough to rise again from the dead He was also able to ascend into heaven. Seeing that the truth of the Resurrection is established so clearly

and firmly on such overwhelming proof, we feel that we are justified in accepting the fact of the Ascension without further question, and passing on at once to consider the different circumstances attending this great miracle.

(*a*) When did the Ascension take place?

On the fortieth day after the Resurrection. Our Lord fasted forty days in the desert in preparation for His public life, and He spent an equal number of days on this earth after the Resurrection in training His apostles for their high calling; in comforting them and confirming their belief in His Resurrection; in teaching them about the kingdom of God which they were to establish on earth; inflaming their hearts with longing for His heavenly kingdom, and exciting them to love God more and more fervently.

(*b*) Where did our Saviour ascend into heaven?

In the Garden of Olives, from the summit of that same mountain which had been the scene of the beginning of His passion. What a contrast! In that same Garden of Olives He had lain prostrate upon the ground, covered with a sweat of blood and sorrowful even unto death, imprisonment, anguish, and pain awaiting Him. But at His glorious Ascension what a different picture the mountain presents! Our blessed Saviour streaming with light and radiance as at the moment of His transfiguration, soaring on high where the glories of heaven await Him, to take possession of that throne on which He reigns in everlasting bliss. Such bitter suffering replaced by immeasurable joy! So with us, too, if we endure them patiently, the deeper, keener, and more

protracted our sufferings the greater will be our reward and consolation.

(*c*) Who accompanied our Saviour in His Ascension?

All those countless multitudes of blessed spirits whom He had released from limbo. Those first fruits of the redemption, who now with their Redeemer at their head triumphantly enter heaven, to take possession of the glory prepared for them.

(*d*) In whose presence did the Saviour ascend into heaven? In presence of the disciples and apostles, of St. Mary Magdalen and of His blessed Mother, those privileged beings who were also witnesses of His Resurrection.

(*e*) How did He ascend into heaven? In the act of blessing His apostles and extending His hands over them in benediction. How full of divine unction must that blessing have been which the departing Saviour left on this earth, to His holy Mother, the apostles and disciples, and to the whole human race, including present and future generations! With what manifestations of loving reverence must all present have received it, kneeling, praying, thanking! Our Saviour went up into heaven not in a fiery chariot like Elias, not in a mighty storm of wind, but by an act of His own power: "And a cloud received Him out of their sight." In the Old Testament God was accustomed to appear and speak to His people from a cloud. The cloud which received the Saviour at His ascension is the final testimony to His divinity.

Who can attempt to describe the feelings which filled the hearts of the onlookers as they saw the

Saviour moving away from them toward heaven? What a heart-breaking farewell, though accompanied also by a great joy at seeing their Master thus glorified! How deep must have been their sorrow at parting from Him, how keen their longing to follow Him, to go with Him, or at least to keep Him with them a little longer! Who can enter into the heart of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, who having once lost her divine Son to find Him again at His glorious Resurrection now had to suffer Him to be taken from her once more! O my Son, where art Thou going without Thy Mother? How empty is the world for me without Thee! How can I exist without Thee! Wo is me that my pilgrimage here below is so prolonged!

Now let us consider, and picture to ourselves as well as we can, what took place in heaven when our Saviour entered it. Let us try and obtain a glimpse at least of this glorious scene. Thousands of blessed souls were in His train, but a thousand thousand angels, yes all the hosts of the heavenly choirs came out to meet Him, the Saviour of the world, the conqueror of evil, the king of heaven, singing with one voice: "Lift up your gates and the King of Glory shall enter in. Who is this King of Glory? The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory" (*Ps.* xxiii. 9, 10). And Jesus, mounting yet higher and higher, above all principality and power and virtue and dominion, takes His place beside the heavenly Father: "Sitteth at the right hand of God the Father almighty"—"Sit Thou at My right hand until I make Thy enemies Thy footstool" (*Ps.* cix. 1). And the whole court of heaven gives forth that glorious

song of praise heard by St. John in the Apocalypse: "The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power and divinity and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and benediction" (*Apoc.* v. 12).

II

Having considered all the circumstances of the Ascension of our Saviour we must now contemplate it with a view to learning what its object was.

To what end and for what purpose did our Saviour ascend into heaven?

1. To enter into possession of His glory. The souls of the just whom He had liberated from limbo were received into heaven, which He had won for them. All those blessed creatures who since then have entered it, or who are still to enter it, owe their happiness to the merits of the Saviour. Having done and gained so much for others, was no reward due to Him for all He had done and suffered? An exceeding great reward awaited Him in the glorifying of His sacred humanity, particularly of His sacred body. He had while on earth enjoyed uninterruptedly the Beatific Vision of God, and though suffering always He was still glorious in heaven. But the glory of His sacred humanity had shone forth only at rare intervals, as at the moment of His transfiguration and in the Resurrection. On His ascension into heaven He took His place as man beside the heavenly Father and was exalted as man above all other human creatures.

2. He ascended into heaven to be our mediator

with His Father. When it is a question of reconciling two people one of whom has grossly offended the other, a go-between is a necessity, and the closer the relationship in which he stands to both parties the more likely are his good offices to be effectual. In this case it is the great and eternal God who has been offended and it is we poor sinners who offend Him. Jesus Christ, our mediator, stands close to God, being Himself God, but He is very near to man also, having lived on earth, and taken on Himself from the cradle to the grave the shame and ignominy of sin. And now that He is seated in glory at the right hand of the Father, He is a mediator who for all time will plead for us, pointing to the wounds which He received for the glory of God and the salvation of mankind. What trust and confidence may we not repose in Him!

3. Our Saviour ascended into heaven to prepare a place for us. Before His ascension He said: "I go to prepare a place for you" (*John* xiv. 2). He went for His own sake to enter into His glory, but for ours also to prepare a place for us. He promised us heaven and then he went to prepare it for us. What an incentive to our hopes! If any man had the certainty that in a very short time he would leave this country and go to America where a beautiful new home all ready awaited him, how very unimportant everything that had up till then formed part of his life would appear! How his thoughts would wander to his future home! The thoughts, the desires, the hopes of our hearts should tend ever upward to our heavenly home. "Seek," says St. Paul, "the things

that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God; mind the things that are above, not the things that are on earth" (*Col.* iii. 1, 2). The things of earth will have but little value for us if we be really full of desire and longing for the eternal life to come where our Saviour awaits us. Poverty or riches, sickness or health, sorrow or happiness, what does it matter? O Lord and Saviour, glorious in heaven after a life of poverty, pain, and suffering, we beg of Thee by Thy wonderful ascension to fill our hearts with the hope of heaven, that we may be consoled in our sufferings, encouraged in good works, and comforted at the hour of death. Amen.

## SERMON XLV

### The General Judgment

*"From thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead"*

We learn from the above words that Jesus Christ will come again with great power and majesty at the end of the world to judge all mankind—the wicked and the good. We say He will come again because He dwelt among us before, when He became man; there will be yet a second coming of Christ on earth. The first time He came in poverty and lowliness; the second time He will appear in great power and glory. The first time, moved with infinite compassion, He left His throne in heaven to be our Saviour; the second time He will come, holding the scales of justice, to pass sentence on the whole world. All men without exception, the good as well as the bad, kings and people, superiors and subordinates, teachers and pupils, parents and children, confessors and penitents, clergy and laity will be compelled to undergo His searching examination. All will be judged; it will be a universal, as well as a general judgment embracing all mankind in every part of the earth; and taking place, as it will, at the consummation of the world its verdict will be final, and it is known as the last judgment.

At this dreaded tribunal, as in any other Court of Justice, there are three things to be specially taken into account:

I. The judge.
II. The witnesses.
III. The sentence.

Now what character does the judge bear before whom we will have to stand? We will find Him inexorable and inflexible in His dealings with us, confronting us with witnesses whom there will be no gainsaying, and passing sentence upon us from which there will be no appeal. We will take these three points to-day and consider them briefly and devoutly under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

I

He before whom we must appear at the last general judgment is no other than Jesus Christ our Lord, who, appointed by God the Father judge of the whole world, and vested by Him with full power and authority, will be unbending in His administration. "The Father hath given all judgment to the Son" (*John* v. 22). He will know how to establish and make good His authority, and will leave us no possible loop-hole for doubting that we are indeed face to face with Him who has power to judge us. Clothed in His sacred humanity and accompanied by His apostles, pointing to His sacred wounds, and holding on high the holy cross, that potent sign with which we are told "the Lord will come to judgment," He will convince us with overwhelming conviction of the truth of what He claims—that He is the Saviour who died for us and who now, in His capacity of judge, comes to render to every man according to his works.

Neither does He lack any of the qualifications required for this office. He is mighty enough to summon all men before Him and His voice, which no one will disregard, will reach even to the tomb, and will be obeyed by all who hear it. His wisdom will penetrate and search out everything, be it ever so hidden, that concerns thee, and me, and all men. The laws of the interior life as well as those of the exterior are known to Him. He understands the hearts of men, their conscience, their entire history. Which of us will dare to lie to such a judge, or concealing anything seek to deceive Him. The character of justice, so essential in awarding judgments, will shine forth conspicuously in all that He does. Yet He is the "Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world" and no one will have cause to complain that the fate of the world has been placed in the hands of one so mild, so patient, so merciful. "He will take equity for an invincible shield" (*Wis.* v. 20).

What a panic of fear will arise when He appears in our midst? Truly "the just shall stand with great constancy," but the wicked "shall be troubled with terrible fear" (*Wis.* v. 1, 2).

II

Who are the witnesses that shall be called to give testimony against us? They will be such as there will be no gainsaying. First our own conscience will come forward. What words of excuse will our tongue be able to utter when we find ourselves confronted by our sins of thought, of desire, of word, of work, of omission. "Thou art

just, O Lord; and Thy judgment is right" (*Ps.* cxviii. 137).

A second witness against us will be the Sacred Heart of our divine Lord Himself. Oh, where shall we find anything to urge in self-defence when we gaze on the rich source from whence so many graces and blessings, such boundless love, such merciful forgiveness have flowed to us. In face of such incriminating testimony we shall be dumb indeed.

"What shall I do when God shall rise to judge? and when He shall examine what shall I answer Him?" (*Job* xxxi. 14.) What shall we indeed be able to answer when pressed by those two witnesses—our sins on the one hand, and God's mercy and goodness to us on the other? The most skillful excuses ever invented by the ingenuity of man will die away on our lips.

"Lord," we may try to say, "it is true I have sinned grievously, I confess it, but I beg Thee to bear in mind that when I was young my parents trained me very badly. No wonder that I grew into what I am." "How now," our Saviour will reply, "you see so clearly that a bad bringing up is the root and beginning of a dissolute life, and yet you have done no better for your own children. You complain of your parents, but your children have twice as much reason to complain of you. Away with such excuses."

"Once more, O Lord, I acknowledged my guilt! But remember that as a child I learned and knew very little. I have lived in ignorance of Thy laws, and it is through ignorance that I have sinned." Yes, it is true you have sinned in ignorance, but it

is this very ignorance that is your sin—you did not know that which it was your duty to learn. You attended neither religious instructions, nor sermons, nor have you taken the smallest trouble to be enlightened. You have groped about in your blindness taking advantage of the dark to commit sin, to make careless confessions, to neglect preparation for death, and now that the light has dawned it is too late.

"O Lord, my eternal judge, my sins are many and grievous, but do not forget, I pray of Thee, that our human will is weak, and that the flesh is weaker still." "Yes," the judge will reply, "you say you are weak, and I know well that it is so, and for this reason I offered you, and placed within your reach, every means of grace. If you recognized your weakness, why did you seek out the occasions of sin instead of flying from them? Why did you not try to draw strength from my sacraments? Why did you neglect prayer, which is always heard? You behaved as though you were a giant who required no help, and who had nothing to fear, and now you dare to plead weakness as an excuse."

"O Lord, bad as I was, I was no worse than thousands of other men." Have you never heard that the road is broad that leads to perdition and that many walk therein?

"It is true, O Lord, all my excuses are poor. But this surely will have value in Thine eyes. To Thy representative on earth in the confessional I have confessed my sins every one without exception." And where was your contrition? Confessing only to sin again; sinning only to confess.

Far from vindicating your conduct, your very confessions tell heavily against you.

"O Lord Jesus Christ, Judge of the living and the dead, I admit my excuses to be poor and weak. But leave me, I implore Thee, one ground of hope! Though my sins be red as scarlet Thy sacred wounds are redder still. To them I fly for shelter and mercy." "My wounds have bled for love of you. All through your life you knew they were open to receive you. Thousands and millions of sinners have found in them mercy and pardon, but you refused their shelter."

Before such a judge, and face to face with such witnesses, it will be vain to put forward useless excuses. The words will die on our lips before we have the courage to give utterance to them.

III

From the sentence pronounced by the Judge, there will be no appeal. Mankind will stand divided into two camps, the good on the right hand, the wicked on the left. Our Saviour Himself has told us what He will say to the wicked: "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and His angels."

"Depart"—as far as heaven is removed from earth.

"From Me"—from Me, your creator, your Saviour. Never will you see Me more, never will you gaze upon My face again. Depart from Me, from heaven, from the angels, from the saints, from My blessed Mother.

"Ye cursed"—O my Saviour, to have Thy curse upon us for all eternity!

"Depart from Me, ye cursed!" Where to? Into hell-fire—to terrors, torture, punishment—to lose the highest good, and be subjected to the extreme penalty of hell.

To the just our Saviour will say, "Come!" Come to Me that we may never more be separated: "Ye blessed of my Father." The blessing of God—a grace containing in itself all honor and glory, all happiness and joy.

"Possess ye"—come in and take possession of the heavenly and eternal kingdom, whose citizens are holy, whose laws are peace and joy, which will last forever, and whose king is God.

This is the wording of the judgment and the sentence is irrevocable. To repeal the verdict it would be necessary to appeal to another judge, appear before a different tribunal, to produce fresh witnesses and open up a new inquiry. But this proceeding is impossible. The Judge who has pronounced sentence is powerful and omniscient and from Him there is no appeal; the tribunal is the highest, the witnesses were all heard, all was in order. Sentence has been passed and will be enforced, for the almighty Judge has power to carry it out. No sooner are the words spoken than hell opens to complete its revenge and to swallow up its victims—and at the same time heaven throws wide its gates to receive its children. "He that openeth and no man shutteth; shutteth and no man openeth" (*Apoc.* iii. 7).

Terrible judgment, given by an inflexible judge, whose evidence there will be no contesting, from whose verdict there will be no appeal. What can we do to make it favorable to us? We can do three

things: We can judge ourselves in examining our conscience, we can accuse ourselves at the tribunal of penance; we can refrain from judging others whether by word or by deed. "Judge not, and you shall not be judged" (*Matt.* vii. 1). Amen.

## SERMON XLVI

### The Holy Ghost

*"I believe in the Holy Ghost."*

THE Apostles' Creed is usually divided into twelve parts or articles, but it can also be broken up into three divisions: The first treating of God the Father, the first person of the Blessed Trinity and His work of the creation of the world; the second of God the Son, the second person of the Blessed Trinity, His incarnation, life, and sufferings, His glory and His judgments; the third dealing with the Holy Ghost, the third of the three divine persons and of those works specially attributed to Him, namely, the guidance of the Church, the sanctification of souls, the conversion of sinners, the beatification of the saints. If we adopt the first method of division, we have now in these instructions reached the eighth article of the Creed, which is, "I believe in the Holy Ghost," and if we follow the second method we are just entering upon the third and last division, which also treats of the Holy Ghost and of His works. The whole teaching concerning the Holy Ghost can be comprised in the answers which we shall give to the three following questions, and we propose to-day, with the assistance of the same Holy Spirit, to make them the subject of our discourse.

I. Who was sent?
II. How was He sent?
III. To whom was He sent?

I

Who was it that, on the tenth day after the Ascension and the fiftieth after the Resurrection of the Saviour, was sent by Him from heaven to us here below? A great and sublime guest—the Holy Spirit of God.

We can come to form some idea of how high and exalted a guest He was, when we consider from whom He came. No one contests that the Church gives to the apostles the highest dignity and pays them the greatest honor because they were the messengers of Jesus Christ, commissioned and sent out by Him to do His work: "As the Father has sent Me, so I also send you" (*John* xx. 21). And by whom was the Holy Ghost sent? From the two most exalted personages, apart from Himself in the universe, the Father and the Son.

His high and exalted dignity shines out if we consider the names and titles of honor bestowed on Him. How do we find Him described? Our Saviour calls Him the Spirit of Truth. The Scriptures tell us of His omnipresence, saying: "He hath filled the whole world" (*Wis.* i. 7); that "He searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God" (1 *Cor.* ii. 10), therefore He is also omniscient; that by "Him the heavens were established" (*Ps.* xxxii. 6), showing Him to be almighty. The Church calls Him "the Lord, the Life-giver, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, who together with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who spoke by the prophets" (Councils of Nice and Constance).

We best succeed in realizing in some measure

His greatness when we considered who and what He is in Himself. For what is He? True God, the third person of the Blessed Trinity. "There are three who give testimony in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one" (1 *John* v. 7). St. Peter makes it clear that to deceive God, or to deceive the Holy Ghost, is one and the same thing. "Ananias, why has Satan tempted thy heart that thou shouldst lie to the Holy Ghost . . . thou hast not lied to men, but to God" (*Acts* v. 3, 4). St Paul uses the words "temple of God," or the "temple of the Holy Ghost," as though they were synonymous terms: "Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 *Cor.* iii. 16). Why are you temples of God? Because the Holy Ghost dwelleth in you.

In the Holy Ghost, therefore, we have a guest, who by reason of His coming to us as He does, sent by the persons of the Blessed Trinity, has the highest claims to be looked upon as one of the most exalted dignity; moreover, we have heard Him described by the most sublime titles; and we know Him to be Himself God.

II

Let us next turn our thoughts to the manner in which the Holy Ghost came on earth, considering to that end what preceded His coming, what signs accompanied Him, and what followed on His coming.

(a) The coming of the Holy Ghost had been announced by the prophets, who foretold the out-

pouring of the Holy Spirit. During His life our Saviour repeatedly, in clear and distinct words and finally in the act of ascending into heaven, promised that He would sent the Holy Ghost: "Stay you in the city till you be endued with power from on high" (*Luke* xxiv. 49).

(b) The coming of the Holy Spirit was accompanied by the sound of a mighty wind, and parted tongues as it were of fire sat upon every one of those present.

What is the signification of the sound from heaven? Great events are generally ushered in by a great sound. The clang of the bell calls us to church, the notes of the bugle summon to battle; the call of the trumpet will awake us at the last day; and the coming of the Holy Ghost was announced by the sound of a great wind.

What signification attaches to the mighty wind? In the first place, wind moves with extraordinary velocity; no steam-engine can travel with a rapidity equal to that with which the storm and the wind can fly along. This lightning speed is expressive of the power of the Holy Ghost, by which the teaching of the Gospel was to spread from town to town, from country to country, from people to people—a thing which actually came to pass. A great storm is, indeed, a wonderful and awe-inspiring thing; yet wind is no more than air in movement, and nothing seems lighter, weaker, thinner, softer than air. But once it is set in motion it becomes possessed of prodigious strength. When the power of the winds is added to them, the waves of the sea, the currents of a river are mighty enough to sweep along with

them in their course everything that opposes them; a blazing fire becomes yet more relentless and voracious when its flames are fanned by the wind which causes them to leap high into the air. The storm pierces the fog, and drives clouds along before it like frightened sheep; it uproots trees and tumbles buildings to ruin; it lashes up the sea as though to lay bare the very floor of the deep; it tears down the sails of ships, breaks off their masts, and capsizes the vessels themselves; nothing can resist the force of a great storm. The storm of wind at Pentecost signifies that the Holy Ghost will conquer everything that offers resistance to the spread of the Church of Christ, whether it be the mists of error, the hatred of the Jews, the contempt of the Gentiles, the sword of the persecutor, the devices of heresy; nothing, absolutely nothing will be able to withstand the action of the Holy Spirit.

And what signification can we attach to the tongues of fire? The tongue is the instrument of speech and it is by means of speech that we preach to the people. These fiery tongues signify that the apostles received through the Holy Ghost the wonderful gift of tongues, which gave them power to speak in languages, hitherto unknown to them, in such a way as to be understood at the same time by the men of different nationalities who listened to them. The Holy Ghost descended in the midst of tongues of fire. Fire gives light and warmth; it softens and melts and can reduce even the hardest metals to a liquid substance. What a beautiful illustration. Not only did the apostles receive the gift of tongues, but their preaching

was endowed with that quality which enabled it to reach and touch men's hearts, enlightening those that were in darkness, giving warmth to the cold, softening the hard of heart, and melting them to tears of contrition, to fervor in the love of God, to zeal in doing penance.

(c) What followed on the coming of the Holy Spirit? A remarkable change took place in the apostles. St. Peter, who had trembled with fear on being questioned by a servant-maid, now became filled with the power of the Holy Ghost, and fearlessly facing the multitudes he publicly confessed Jesus Christ whom he had denied in so cowardly a way to be the Son of God—he boldly laid the murder of the Saviour, the innocent one, at the door of the Jews, showing them clearly that the proof of His divinity is in the fact of His resurrection from the dead. Finally, he called upon them to believe, to receive baptism, and to enter the Church of Christ. What was the result? Look upon the first-fruits of the working of the Holy Spirit. Nearly 3,000 souls were converted, thus laying the foundation of the Catholic Church and forming the first Catholic congregation.

III

As our last point we will now consider to whom it was that the Holy Ghost was sent, where He now dwells, and what are His office and works. He was sent to and He dwells and works in a special manner in the Holy Catholic Church, and in the souls of the just.

(a) What is the work of the Holy Ghost in the Church? The catechism tells us "the Holy Ghost

will abide with the Church forever and guide it in the way of holiness and truth." That the Holy Ghost teaches and guides the Church is palpable. The truths proposed to our belief by the Church consist of a collection of sublime and wonderful and mysterious propositions, which to believe calls for the greatest exercise of faith. How is it that these propositions have been preserved so sacredly in all their purity, and are so faithfully and so fully accepted by the faithful? Not by human agency. Call to mind the many theories and speculations concerning all manner of subjects that have been formulated and advanced, defended, attacked, and upset by men outside the Church. What numbers of great thinkers have created a sensation with their new doctrines and their new views of the universe! But as one wave succeeds another, so have their beliefs and opinions come and gone, sometimes washed away while the originator of them was yet living, often forgotten before they had time to be properly understood, and in most cases leaving very little trace behind. But the teaching of the Holy Ghost, preserved in its integrity, lasts for all time, and is like the rock in the sea, over which the tide ebbs and flows.

(b) The Holy Ghost is the sanctifier of the Church. The graces necessary for our sanctification are dispensed pre-eminently through the sacraments, which viewed from a purely objective standpoint would appear to consist of nothing more than a few outward symbols, a few weak words. No one is capable of discerning in the water used in baptism, in the holy oil, or the

chrism in Confirmation, in the words spoken by the priest in the sacrament of Penance, the power and virtue to make men holy. But to these outward signs is joined the active operation of the Holy Spirit working and bringing forth results which neither the forces of water nor steam, nor electricity; nor the hand of men, nor the agency of spirits, be they good or bad, is qualified to produce, namely, the sanctification of souls. Without a power behind it to apply its strength a saw will not cut. The sacraments work and bring forth fruit through the action and power of the Holy Spirit of God.

(c) The Holy Ghost is the ruler of the Church. We sometimes see the Church beautifully and suggestively represented in pictures as a tiny boat on a stormy sea with either St. Peter or the Pope seated at the rudder. Call to your minds the length of time that little boat, laden with its heavy human freight, has been afloat on that stormy and treacherous ocean, and what hands have held the rudder. They have always been weak hands and oftentimes they have been aged and infirm as well; they have been inexperienced, trembling, and unstable, frightened and sometimes even dying hands. Oh, if that little boat had been guided on its long journey by human power alone, the storms of passion which have broken over it, would long since have destroyed it; the want of union among the crew would have brought ruin upon it; the rudder would have slipped altogether from the feeble grasp of those that held it, and been broken up into a thousand pieces! Only the thought that the Church is guided and directed

in its progress by supernatural action can explain to us how it has outlived all other states, and weathered the storms, the persecutions, and heresies of so many hundreds of years.

Just as the Holy Ghost works in the Church, so does He also operate in the soul of each individual among the faithful, and especially in those souls who are in a state of grace. He illuminates their minds with inward light in all that concerns their true interests, both in the past and in the future; and as the rising sun melts away the snow He dispels all doubts by His grace. He strengthens them, awakening in their hearts impulses which they could never have experienced without His aid, and giving them endurance and patience to accomplish things that would be impossible to mere human nature. He consoles with consolations which are not of this world; in a word He dispenses those gifts which are known as the special gifts of the Holy Spirit: Wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord.

The power of the Holy Ghost is as strong today as at the first Pentecost and He is ever ready to take possession of our hearts. Let us prepare for Him a dwelling-place in our souls, where He will be free to work and operate within us; let us ourselves be the instruments by which His work is furthered and carried on.

Are you in doubt? Turn to the Spirit of Truth. Faint-hearted? Go to the Fountain of Strength. Sorrowful? Throw yourself upon the Source of all Consolation, who will certainly uphold you. Are you a sinner? The Spirit of Holiness and Purity

will lead you to repentance. Hard of heart? The warmth of the Holy Spirit will move you to contrition and penance. We will pray often that the power of the Holy Spirit may be made manifest in us, in life and in death and in eternity. Amen.

## SERMON XLVII

### Conception, Definition, and Origin of the Church

*"I believe in the Holy Catholic Church"*

We now come to the consideration of those important words: "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church," which, brief as they are, are full of the richest and deepest meaning and contain much that is not at first sight easy to understand. The subject they deal with may be divided into four parts: the first setting forth the history of the institution and the ordering of the Church; the second showing the marks and signs by which we may know her; the third treating of her aims and purpose; and the fourth and last dealing with the doctrine of the communion of saints. We will begin with the first part, which treats of the founding and ordering of the Church, confining ourselves to-day to considering under the guidance of the Holy Spirit:

I. The definition of the Church.
II. The origin of the Church.

I

In making the following meditation, dearly beloved brethren, we must at the outset form a clear idea of what we mean by the word "Church" when we say I believe in the Holy Catholic Church. The catechism asks: "What is the Church?" and the answer given is: "The Church is the congregation of all those who profess the

faith of Christ, partake of the same sacraments, and are governed by their lawful pastors under one visible head."

The word "Church" in this context means a congregation, but we notice that it is capable of bearing several very different meanings. It is sometimes used to designate a building consecrated to the service of God with tower and bell, and containing an altar, a chancel, and an organ. We have many such churches, big and small, in our towns and villages. Often by the word "Church" we mean the service itself, as, for instance, when we say: "Church begins at such an hour," "Church is over." But when in the Apostles' Creed we say, "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church," we mean neither the building itself nor the service which is held in the building, but something quite different, namely, a congregation or community of people.

Now what is understood by a community? A community consists of a number of people who, agreeing on one or more points, are joined by a common bond. A number of men of the same origin and speaking the same language possess community of race, and people inhabiting the same country and obeying the same laws make up the community of a State. Children of the same parents living under the same roof, with the same ties of blood, constitute the community of the family. Now the congregation which we call the Church is a community which includes a very large number of people, indeed.

Who are these people who belong to the Church? In what way are they connected? They are all

Christians, that means men who profess the Faith of Jesus Christ and who profess it in the orthodox way; and who, still living on this earth, are joined together under one common head, which is our Holy Father, the Pope of Rome.

The Church, therefore, is the union of all faithful Christians under one head. Further, it is a visible union, that is one that can be outwardly perceived and apprehended; therefore, it is a community forming a body of which we are able to define the extent and the limits, whose head is well known, whose dispositions and laws are public property. A visible body. Our Saviour compared His Church to a number of various objects: to a banquet, to a field, a vineyard, a sheepfold, a net, a ship, a house, a kingdom—always to some visible, outward, material object. The Church is of necessity a visible body because it is meant for material human beings. Should we be right in saying that the Church is the union of all those who possess the true faith, or of all those who are in the grace of God, or of the elect who are predestined for eternal bliss? That would be all very well if the Church were an invisible Church, but this is not the case. How can we say who those are who have inwardly the true faith? God alone knows. Or who can tell how many men are in a state of grace? We do not know for certain even in our own case. "We know not whether we be worthy of love or of hate." Who can distinguish the chosen ones of God? God, and God only. By such criteria we should create an invisible body, which could have neither head nor

laws nor sacraments, a body which would be in reality no body at all.

Therefore the Church is a visible community, the union of all faithful Christians on earth under one head, which is the Pope of Rome, and under him the assembled bishops.

Considered in its extent the congregation of the Church bears some resemblance to the community of the human race. All mankind form one body by reason of their having a common origin and aim, and they share the same human nature and are all governed by the providence of God. The Church does not embrace the whole of mankind, though it is her aim to win all men, and to endure as long as human creatures exist in this world. "Go ye and teach all nations"; "There will be one fold and one shepherd" (*John* x. 16).

In its laws and constituted authority the Church is on the same lines as a constitutional State, its leaders making the laws which govern it, and watching over and enforcing their observance. In the Church it is the head of the Church, the Pope, that guides the entire community, framing laws, altering and explaining them, dispensing from them and awarding and remitting punishment as he thinks right. "Whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven" (*Matt.* xvi. 19).

Considered from the point of view of the relation of one member to the other the Church closely resembles one great family. The members of a family are bound together not only by reason of their common dwelling-place and mutual interests, but also by the bond of affection and love, habit

of thought, religion, and even by the resemblance of their features. The members of the Church are bound together not only by the same professions and beliefs, but by a common head whom they call Father and whom they truly love as a Father; and they are also united amongst themselves by the bond of mutual charity. "See how they love one another."

But the closest analogy of all is that which exists between the Church and another great community, that of the blessed in heaven. For who is their head? God Himself. What is their aim? The glory of God. How are they constantly occupied? In praising God. What laws govern them? Love alone. So the Church, if we consider her aims, is but the preparation, the beginning, the seed of the kingdom of heaven. For this reason she is sometimes herself called the kingdom of God. St. John compares her to the City of God, the heavenly Jerusalem, which he witnessed descending upon earth, decked as a bride going out to meet her bridegroom.

II

Now that we know what is to be understood by the word "Church" we will go further and inquire into the origin of the Church. We are told by the catechism that it was founded by Christ, the Son of God made man, and it is because it is the work of the Son of God that it is called in Holy Scripture the "Church of God" (1 *Cor.* x. 32; xi. 16, 22; xiv. 4; xv. 9; *Gal.* i. 13; *Phil.* iii. 6; *Tim.* iii. 5). Being His own work, the fruit of His most precious blood, it is no wonder that Christ loved

it, and loved to speak of it. No subject is so dear to our hearts as the work we consider the masterpiece of our hands, and after the Resurrection we find Christ constantly talking to the apostles of the kingdom of God, the Church. Standing in such intimate relation to the Saviour, and being so tenderly loved by Him, it is sometimes called the body, the mystical body of Christ, and, farther than that, it is even called the "Bride of Christ." In the Apocalypse the angel said to St. John: "Come, and I will show thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb" (*Apoc.* xxi. 9). Christ is the lamb, and His bride is the Church.

The Church is, therefore, the work of Jesus Christ, and, though a community of human creatures, is one founded by God Himself. For, truly, if the Church be not founded by God, then it must be the work of human hands; and, like everything that is human, it would be subject to change, and would be essential or unessential to us only according to the measure of human things, and certainly not deserving of a place in the Apostles' Creed.

The Church of God is the work of infinite wisdom, and it is wrong of ignorant, foolish men to find fault with its constitution and workings, even attempting to improve, alter, or upset them. No wisdom prevails against God, and the Church, founded as it is by Him, is unchangeable, indestructible, and incapable of improvement.

The Church is the work of the Almighty, and herein lies the secret of its durableness and stability: "The foundations thereof are in the holy mountains" (*Ps.* lxxxvi. 1). It is madness and folly to think of undermining the Church, for

no power can prevail against the power of God. Where are now those States that, at the time of the first beginning of the Church of God, flourished and seemed well-nigh indestructible? If their names did not occasionally occur in books of history we should know nothing at all about them. What has become of those great minds which turned all the artillery of their powers of ridicule and of learning against the Church to destroy it? They are all dead and gone. Voltaire, that insolent opponent of Christianity, wrote in the eighteenth century: "If twelve fishermen founded the Church, surely twelve philosophers can succeed in destroying it." For twenty years he made merry at the expense of God almighty, and at the end of that time he was called to render his account, and died a death of despair. But the Church lives on.

The Church is the work of the Most High God, and has on this account as it were a vested right to exist, to spread, and to proclaim her teaching; a right which no law of man can curtail or take from her: "We ought to obey God rather than men" (*Acts* v. 29).

The Church is the work of the all-holy and merciful God, and is herself the instrument of the divine goodness. It is to the advantage and benefit of all States and people, and of the whole of humanity, that the members of the Church should ever grow and increase, that her children should cling closely to her, follow her faithfully and diligently, and make use of all the means of grace she offers them; for so they will secure their greater good in this world and their eternal salvation in the world to come. Amen.

## SERMON XLVIII

### Peter the Head of the Church

*"The Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints"*

Our last instruction made clear what is to be understood by the word "Church" as used in the Apostles' Creed; we saw that it means "the congregation of all those who profess the faith of Christ, partake of the same sacraments, and are governed by their lawful pastors, under one visible head." We saw further that the founder of the Church is no other than Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man, and we indicated to what weighty conclusions this one great truth must lead. We will now go on with our questions from the catechism and ask you: "Who is the visible head of the Church?" "Our Holy Father the Pope, the Bishop of Rome, is the Vicar of Christ on earth, and the visible Head of the Church." "Why is the Pope, the Bishop of Rome, the visible Head of the Church?" "The Pope, the Bishop of Rome, is the visible Head of the Church because he is the successor of St. Peter, whom Christ made the chief of the apostles and the visible Head of the Church." These are not mere idle questions, but are of the utmost importance and we can furnish overwhelming and convincing proof of the accuracy of the answers given to them:

I. From our Saviour's own words.
II. From the conduct of St. Peter himself.

III. From the attitude of the other apostles.

These are the three points of the meditation, which, with the help of the Holy Ghost, we propose to make with you to-day.

I

(a) If we consider that Christ in the first instance solemnly promised the highest office in the Church to St. Peter and then at a later period formally laid this great charge and responsibility upon him, it becomes very apparent that St. Peter actually and in truth was appointed by the Saviour to the exalted position we are now claiming for him.

(b) The promise was made in the neighborhood of Cesarea Philippi. Our Saviour was questioning the apostles as to whom He was said to be: "Whom do men say that the Son of Man is?" and they answered: "Some John the Baptist, and other some Elias, and other some Jeremias, or one of the prophets." Still our Saviour pressed the subject further: "But whom do you say that I am?" To this great question Peter alone replied, saying: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." These words constitute a glorious profession of faith and a public acknowledgment of Jesus Christ as the promised Messias, Son of God and true God, and elicited from our Saviour the praise and the reward which they deserved. Now listen carefully to what Our Lord replied to Peter. First He pointed out to him that his faith and knowledge were gifts of God and the work of grace: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona, because flesh and blood hath not re-

vealed it to thee, but My Father who is in heaven." Then continuing He said: "And I say to thee: thou art Peter." By this our Saviour clearly meant: "Thou hast told Me who I am, now I will tell thee who thou art, and what I will have thee to do. Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Now, "Peter," as you know, means rock, and he was to be the rock on which the Church was to be built. A stone invariably forms the foundation of any building, and the foundations are also that part of the structure which requires to be most carefully and firmly laid. Peter it was who was to bear the whole weight of the Church, giving it strength and solidity, just as the foundations of any edifice are responsible for the cohesion and steadiness of the entire building. "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (*Matt.* xvi. 18).

Unquestionably these words actually do occur in the Gospel, and their signification is plain. The one and only loophole for an objection to the Church's reading of them which the opponents of the Papacy can discover is to try and make out that in speaking of the rock on which He was going to build His Church our Saviour intended to and actually did indicate Himself. But this theory does not hold water, for it is clearly to St. Peter that Our Lord was speaking and whom He was addressing when He used the phrase, "I say to thee." It was Peter whom he wished to reward, and to whom the words, "Blessed art thou Peter, Bar-Jona," were applicable, and there can be no doubt that if there is any sequence or

connection at all in the whole passage the words, "To thee will I give the keys of the kingdom of heaven," must also have been directly addressed to Peter.

On the same occasion, and almost in the same sentence, our Saviour repeated and enlarged upon His promise to St. Peter: "And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth it will be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth it shall be loosed also in heaven" (*Matt.* xvi. 19). What power to place in the hands of a mortal man! The Church is the kingdom of heaven and St. Peter was to hold the keys of that kingdom; it is evident, therefore, that the place allotted to him in the Church of God was that of head, for it is the master of the house, the ruler of the city or the fortress, who holds the keys. Therefore, when Jesus Christ promised to give Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven, it was equivalent to saying to him: "I will make you to be the head of My Church."

(c) What our Saviour promised He also made good. After the Resurrection He appeared on the Lake of Genasereth to seven of His apostles, who had together passed a wearisome night in unsuccessful attempts at fishing. Our Saviour first encouraged them by granting them a miraculous draught of fishes; then He took food with them; and, next, turning to Peter, He asked him three times: "Simon, Son of John, lovest thou Me?" (*John* xxi. 15.) Each time Peter replied: "Yes, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee." In recognition and as a reward of his love our

Saviour gave him charge of His lambs and of His sheep: "Feed my lambs, feed my sheep." The faithful are the lambs of Jesus, and His sheep are their pastors, and lambs and sheep together make up the whole flock of Christ, which is the Church; and to this flock He appointed Peter shepherd. The shepherd is, we know, the head of the whole flock, and St. Peter is the shepherd of all those who belong to Christ, the guide and head of all faithful Christians.

II

Our Saviour all through His life seemed to single out St. Peter from the other disciples, as if in anticipation, and in order to prepare the way for the final signal mark of His favor which He intended to bestow on him. It was in Peter's boat that He pushed off from land when He preached to the people from the sea; He paid the didrachma for Himself and Peter, and it was for St. Peter He prayed that his faith might not fail, but that he might strengthen his brethren. Although Holy Scripture does not mention it, many Fathers of the Church hold that at the Last Supper, at the washing of feet, our Saviour washed St. Peter's feet first, and from the account given by St. Paul it is clear that Jesus after His Resurrection appeared first of all to Peter; and, finally, shortly before His ascension into heaven, He foretold to Peter the martyrdom he was so soon to undergo. All this seems to agree and be in keeping with the fact that Peter was the one appointed by Christ to be the head of His Church.

Moreover, St. Peter himself showed by his whole line of conduct that he looked upon him-

self as the divinely appointed head of the Church, for after the ascension of our Saviour he seemed at once to assume the leadership. It was he who caused a new apostle to be chosen in the place of the traitor Judas, presiding himself over the election. At Pentecost it was he who preached to the assembled multitudes, converting 3000: "But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice" (*Acts* ii. 14). In conjunction with St. John he worked the first miracle, saying to the lame man at the gate of the Temple: "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, arise and walk" (*Acts* iii. 6). He decreed the punishment which God actually brought to pass on Ananias and Saphira. It was his action in first admitting Pagans to be members of the Church that contributed so enormously to its extension and development. He, on his own responsibility, excluded Simon Magus from the fold. When the apostles and disciples all assembled at Jerusalem to discuss and pronounce on matters of the gravest import, it was again St. Peter who spoke, and as the Holy Scripture tells us: "All the multitude held their peace." It was, moreover, he who established the Holy See at Rome, and, let it be noted, he did all this in the presence and with the full knowledge of the other apostles, not one of them disputing his authority. They fully recognized St. Peter as appointed by Christ to be their head and the head of the whole of Christendom.

III

Not only this (and now we come to the third point of our discourse), the other apostles ex-

pressly acknowledged St. Peter as their leader. Wherever the names of the twelve apostles are enumerated in Holy Scripture St. Peter is always mentioned first. "And the names of the twelve apostles are these: the first Simon, who is called Peter" (*Matt.* x. 2). Why was he called the first? He was not the first among them to be chosen by Our Lord, for that was Andrew. Nor was he the best-loved; St. John is known to have been that. Neither was he supposed to have been the eldest in point of years. For what reason, then, was he called the first? Perhaps you will say that after all some one's name had to come first. No doubt; but why, even when we find the names of the other apostles occurring in different order, does that of St. Peter invariably come first; and, though he is always described as the first, are none of the others ever called the second or the third? Moreover, he is mentioned by name, even when the others are not. "Peter and the rest," "Peter and the twelve," "Peter and the others," and, while he is always put first, another name, that of Judas, is always mentioned last. All this can not surely be mere coincidence; it is done intentionally, and clearly indicates and emphasizes that among all the apostles St. Peter is the highest and the first, chief of the apostles and head of the Church.

What more can you require to be convinced on this subject. Our Saviour continually singled St. Peter out from among the other disciples. He promised him the highest office, and in the end He bestowed it on him. St. Peter himself consistently behaved as only one vested with the high-

est authority would be entitled to do, and the other apostles recognized without question his power as head of the Church, and constantly appealed to it. In view of all this it is not surprising that at the last Vatican Council all those are anathematized who asserted that St. Peter was not the Prince of the Apostles appointed by Christ to be the visible head of the whole Church militant. Around the dome of the Church of St. Peter in Rome, written in enormous letters, are the words of Christ: "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." These words are the credentials, the letters patent, as it were, which attest the power of St. Peter and his successors.

With joy let us, then, call St. Peter Prince of the apostles, Head of the Church, Vicar of Christ, and our first Pope, for in so doing we are following the example of Christ and the apostles. But if we honor St. Peter, we must also pay reverence to his successor, the Pope of Rome. Let us give him filial affection, loyal obedience and single-minded submission, inwardly in our thoughts and feelings as well as outwardly in all our actions; so we shall show ourselves to be true members of the Church, disciples of Christ, and sincere and genuine Christians. Amen.

## SERMON XLIX

### The Pope the Successor of St. Peter

*"I believe in the Holy Catholic Church"*

The apostle St. Peter was the first head of the Church, appointed by the divine Founder Himself. Our Saviour promised this dignity to St. Peter, and then actually bestowed it upon him. After the ascension of Christ St. Peter acted as the ruler of the Church, and he was recognized and accepted as such by the other apostles.

In continuing the course of our instructions the next question to be considered is, who has been the head of the Church since the death of St. Peter? A little thought on the three following points will give us the answer:

I. It was necessary that the office of chief shepherd should continue to exist after the death of St. Peter.

II. St. Peter went to Rome and there became Bishop of Rome, and was holding this office at the time of his death.

III. The Pope is the head of the Church because he is the legitimate successor of St. Peter to the See of Rome.

I

It was necessary that after the death of St. Peter the Church should still have a supreme head. This we know was the intention of Christ, for He instituted the Church that it might last

not only for a few years, or a couple of centuries, but for all time. "Behold I am with you always, even to the consummation of the world" (*Matt.* xxviii. 20). "The gates of hell shall not prevail against My Church," and "The spirit of truth will abide with you forever." Clearly, Christ meant His Church to endure forever, and we have proved to you beyond doubt that in the beginning He Himself appointed who was to be its head. If a supreme head of the Church was necessary at the beginning, was it not just as necessary later on and at all times of her existence? Our Saviour likened His Church to a building, and certainly a building can neither be erected nor can it stand firm without foundations. He compared her to a flock, which, whether it be a large flock or a small flock, will not long remain intact without a shepherd. Our Saviour also called His Church a kingdom, and you will agree that a kingdom where there were no regent to rule in the absence of the king would be in grave danger. St. Paul likens the Church to a body, and neither in youth nor in old age can a body exist without a head. The position of the Church in later centuries became, if anything, more complicated and difficult than in the beginning and, therefore, more in need of a ruler and guide. In the early days of Christianity the Church was more limited; congregations were smaller, consisting perhaps only of a handful of people, and they were closely united, being one heart and one soul, and living really as fellow-citizens of the one great kingdom of God. Moreover, the apostles had themselves been learners at the feet of the Saviour but a short time before,

and, full of the Spirit of God, were unerring in what they taught. If ever the Church could have dispensed with the authority of a supreme ruler it would have been at this time, and yet one was definitely named and appointed by our Saviour. His wisdom and providence foresaw the persecutions and divisions that were to follow the greater expansion of the Church, which He knew would grow and increase, spreading over many countries and nations, and embracing many different races of people. He realized that the apostles themselves would pass away in a very few years, while the ranks of the faithful, growing larger and larger, would require a greater number of priests and bishops. He knew, too, that His Church would number more sinners than saints among her children, and that enemies from without and from within would rise up against her. Could He, in His wisdom and providence, have meant to leave her to face these dangers and difficulties with no supreme head, no ruler and guide to control and direct her? Such a thing is incredible. If our Saviour appointed a supreme head for the days of the apostles, it is beyond question His will that the office of Pope should always exist in His Church.

II

On whom was to fall St. Peter's mantle after his death, or, in other words, who was to be his successor? The following points will make this clearly apparent.

(1) We say that St. Peter went to Rome and remained in Rome. Now is this true? Since the

Great Schism it has been fiercely contested, and it is easy to understand that those who do not want to recognize and submit to the Pope of Rome should try to make out that he is not the successor of St. Peter. It is certainly clear that he is not the successor of St. Peter, if St. Peter never went to Rome. A great deal depends, therefore, on our being certain whether or not St. Peter ever did go to the Eternal City, and for this reason the enemies of the Papacy have left no stone unturned to controvert this fact.

But they have not been successful, for it is established beyond doubt that St. Peter not only went to Rome, but that he remained there. A whole host of trustworthy witnesses of ancient times, and from the most different parts of the world, from Italy (Caius), Gallicia, Africa (Tertullian), Greece, Asia (Eusebius), Egypt (Clement), testify to it. It would be traveling too far afield for me to lay before you in detail the evidence of every single one of these writers. To do so I should have to give you their names and the date at which they lived; explaining how much weight was to be attached to what they say and citing their exact words in their full meaning and context. But I will quote one writer for you, whose testimony, in perhaps a more striking way than any other, lends weight to what I am contending; for St. Peter himself has written two epistles, both of which form part of the Canon of Scripture, and at the close of the first one he says: "The Church that is in Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you." Now where was St. Peter when he wrote this? He tells us himself

he was in Babylon: "The Church that is in Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you" (1 *Peter* v. 13). Which Babylon can he mean? Was it Babylon on the river Euphrates in distant Asia, where King Nabuchodonosor and King Balthasar reigned, where Daniel performed his miracles, the city which was finally conquered by Cyrus the Great? No, this is not the Babylon meant, for at the time St. Peter wrote his epistle it had long been a heap of ruins. None of the apostles ever went there; it had had no Christian community. The Babylon to which the apostle alludes is Rome. The early Christians were fond of comparing Rome to the ancient city of Babylon, and of bringing out and accentuating the points of resemblance between them; and there were many. Babylon, which once represented an empire with 120 provinces, had been as Rome was, the most powerful capital of the world in its own day. It had been, like Rome, the center and the bulwark of Paganism, and a perfect swamp of iniquity and vice. The rulers of Babylon were the great enemies of the religion of the true God under the old dispensation, and the emperors of Rome played the same part to the divine dispensations under the New Law, by the zeal and bitterness with which they persecuted the Christians. You will agree that the name of "the new Babylon" given to Rome can not be considered very far-fetched. In the Apocalypse St. John speaks of the mighty Babylon, which he describes as a city built on seven hills, having dominion over all the kings of the earth, which though at that time prosperous and flourishing would in the end be

overthrown and meet its downfall. Clearly, this is the city of Rome, which is actually built on seven hills, and which then held dominion over all the kings of the world. Though it was glorious and appeared unconquerable it was, nevertheless, hurrying to its end. If St. John alluded to Rome simply as "Babylon" it would be natural that St. Peter should do the same. So it is St. Peter's own lips that tell us of his being in Rome: "The Church that is in Babylon . . . saluteth you," means "the Church that is in Rome."

III

St. Peter not only went to Rome, he died there. I will give you the evidence of but one of the many writers of old from whom we learn this. Eusebius, the Father of Church history, writes: "According to tradition Paul was decapitated in Rome during the reign of Nero, while Peter was crucified, and this tradition is supported by the fact that the holy apostles are buried in Rome and their remains venerated there up to this very day." Tradition vouches for the fact that both the holy apostles suffered martyrdom under Nero, and at the time of this writer it is shown that their remains were venerated actually in their sepulchers. The same author appeals to another writer, who lived and wrote in Rome a hundred years earlier: "I can direct you to the memorials of the apostles. In going to the Vatican or along the Ostian Way you will see the memorials of the founders of this church in front of you." So, apparently, at the time at which this was written there existed in Rome either at the place where

they suffered death, or at the spot where they were interred, memorials to St. Peter and St. Paul; the writer had himself seen them, there is no doubting his word. Now, would memorials be erected in Rome to people who had never been there, or would the people of Rome be likely to commemorate the death of those who were unconnected with their city? Rome was not an unknown village, but the capital of the world, full of Christians, divines, learned men, and artists of all kinds. It is impossible that a monument commemorating St. Peter's martyrdom could have been erected there, that the place of his burial could have been venerated for centuries, if it were not true that he had died and been buried there. Such a thing is absolutely incredible.

St. Peter was in Rome, and died in Rome, as bishop and guide of the Roman Church. Now, whoever became Bishop of Rome in his place would naturally be his successor and here we have the beginning of the supremacy of the Bishop of Rome over all the other bishops of the world. Their judgment is appealed to, and with them rests all decisions in matters relating to faith; they summon Church councils, presiding themselves on all occasions, and always taking precedence. Here we see the working of divine Providence. Rome was originally the center and capital of the world, the home of many different forms of worship, the sink of immorality and vice; but it was likewise the seat of the most powerful emperor, where all the culture, knowledge, art, and magnificence of Paganism was concentrated. All roads lead to Rome. It seems but fit that the

capital of the great Pagan empire should become the center of God's earthly kingdom; that the chair of Peter should be side by side with the throne of the great emperors; that the head of the apostles should exercise his jurisdiction there where all the powers of Paganism were once let loose against him. Yes, dearly beloved brethren, if we had lived at the time of the apostles, and been present when they divided the world between them for their work of conversion, and if we had been asked where Peter was to go, I think that even with our limited knowledge and outlook we should at once have said: "Peter is the head; Peter must go to the capital; Peter must go to Rome."

The veneration due from us to St. Peter, the head of the apostles, should be extended to his successor the Pope, and to his city, the very name of which should ring in Catholic ears as that of a second home—the holy city of Rome. Amen.

## SERMON L

### The Unity of the Church and the Marks by Which We May Know Her

*"I believe in the Holy Catholic Church"*

We learned in our last instruction that St. Peter was the first Head of the Church founded by Jesus Christ, and that ever since his time whoever occupies the episcopal see of Rome has always been acknowledged his legitimate successor as visible head of the Church and Vicar of Christ. Although St. Peter represented the supreme authority in the Church, this does not by any means imply that it has no other rulers and governors; on the contrary, the apostles were all by divine appointment rulers of the Church, only subject to their head, St. Peter. Every bishop who, rightly consecrated, is in communion with the Pope, or, in other words, who acknowledges the Sovereign Pontiff as his head, and is in turn recognized by him as a bishop of the Church, is a direct successor of the apostles. The different bishops each govern the particular diocese assigned to them by the Pope, and, as this implies more work than it would be possible for one person to accomplish single-handed, the bishops in their turn have under them priests to assist them in carrying on the labors involved by their office.

In this way unity and order reign throughout the Church of Christ. The faithful follow their priests, the priests obey their bishops, while the

bishops in their turn act in submission to the Pope. The whole presents the appearance of a well-disciplined army, and is a picture of the heavenly hosts, whose angelic choirs, rising one above the other, all bow in unison and harmony before the throne of the most high God.

Having considered the material construction and constitution of the Church, I now want to pass on with you to two more very important points, asking first the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

I. The unity of the Church.

II. The marks by which we may know the Church.

I

Did Jesus Christ, think you, found several Churches, or only one? There can be no two answers to this question. Just as our Saviour taught but one faith, and appointed but one head, so did He found but one Church.

This is a proposition of extreme importance, but is nevertheless one which can be easily proved in the clearest possible manner. Whenever our Saviour spoke of His Church He invariably did so in the singular. "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church." One rock, one Peter, one Church built on the rock. In Holy Scripture, and by the lips of our Saviour Himself, the Church is constantly spoken of as "the kingdom of heaven," and this name well describes what is indeed nothing else but an institution to prepare souls for heaven. But it is always of one single kingdom of heaven that we hear men-

tion. Our Lord was in the habit of frequently comparing His Church to earthly objects of different kinds. For instance, He likens it to a field in which grow plants of all kinds, cockle as well as wheat—but all in the one single field; to a vineyard where many laborers come and go at different hours of the day to do their work—in the same vineyard; to a flock with lambs and sheep, and it is always one flock under one shepherd of which He speaks; to the grain of mustard seed, which growing into a big tree the birds of the air come and dwell in the branches thereof—but it sprang from one single grain of mustard seed. He further compares the Church to the net which encloses good fish and bad; to a house; to a banquet; to a kingdom; in fact, to the most various and different things, but we find that it is invariably a single object.

Our Saviour taught but one faith, and He appointed but one head; moreover, before His passion He prayed earnestly to His heavenly Father for the unity of the Church: "Keep them in Thy name, whom Thou hast given Me; that they may be one, as we also are" (*John* xvii. 11). There can be no more complete unity than that of the Father and the Son, who are one in thought, in will, in essence. Such is the unity and union which our Saviour prayed might be that of His Church.

Few things are easier to prove conclusively and clearly than that our Saviour founded but one Church, and this being the case it follows that, let there be as many Churches as there will, one only is justified; for one only among them all can

be the true Church of God. They may clamor and call out as loudly as they can, and claim what they will; ours, ours only, is the Church founded by Christ. Let them each and all style themselves Christian; one Church only emanated from Jesus Christ.

If, then, there be only one true Church founded by Jesus Christ, it is the duty of every man to look round and inquire carefully which among all the different Churches it really is; and should it prove to be the one most despised and rejected in this world, persecuted, hated, and condemned on all sides, it matters not. It is to her we must cling, in her we must believe, and as her child that we must live and die. We may go a step further and confidently assert that if Our Lord founded a Church to guide men to heaven, then assuredly He took care that she should be distinguished and marked out from all others and be so clearly and easily recognizable that all who set eyes upon her shall at once know her to be the true Church of Christ. This we have a right to expect from the goodness and fidelity of God our Father, and we will find that He has not left us in the dark in this difficulty.

II

We have now reached the second point of our instruction, which is to consider what are the marks by which we may know the Church of Christ. "Has the Church any marks by which it may be known?" is the question of the catechism. "The Church has four marks by which it may be known: It is one; it is holy; it is catholic, and it

is apostolic." It is further asked: "In what Church are these marks found?" "These marks are found in the Holy Roman Catholic Church alone."

When a murder is perpetrated, and the murderer escapes, he is searched for everywhere. But the question is, how will he ever be detected and singled out from among the multitudes of men in the swarming streets of populous cities, or on crowded steamers and trains? He can change his name, alter his dress, and shave his beard; therefore, clues such as these are of no value whatever. What is wanted is some eccentricity, some personal, individual distinguishing mark or trait that can not be easily cast off, or got rid of, as for instance a squint, a stammer, a scar, a limp, the absence of a finger, etc., etc. If at the time of the murder he was known to possess any peculiarity of this kind, the police will have no great difficulty in tracing him. Telegrams describing him are despatched in all directions, and the criminal will betray himself, and will be taken, it may be even in some far-distant country, on the other side of the sea.

Why do we know so surely that the Church of Christ must be one, holy, catholic, and apostolic? Simply because Christ in founding His Church gave it these four marks, and that from the beginning they were stamped upon it. It is evident that the Church of Christ must be one. The Church is God's kingdom and is to last forever. "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Now the merest child knows that a disunited kingdom has no stability. Our Saviour Himself said,

"Every kingdom divided against itself shall be made desolate" (*Matt.* xii. 25). What manner of kingdom or Church, therefore, do we think our Saviour would have been likely to establish? A united kingdom, or a disunited one? Clearly, a united one.

Our Lord's object in founding a Church was to guide men to heaven, and this is why He so often spoke of it as a kingdom. In order to lead men to heaven it must first sanctify them and make them holy, and this it can not do unless it is itself holy. To illuminate others a light must burn brightly; to heat the room the stove must first get warm itself; so, too, the Church, in order to sanctify mankind, must be itself holy.

Further, let us consider for whom and for what length of time Christ founded His Church. It is for all men without exception: "Go ye into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature." It is for all time: "And behold I am with you always, even to the consummation of the world." It must therefore be catholic or universal, spreading over the whole earth, and subsisting from the days of Christ onward through the centuries. Any Church which dates its existence from a time after the life of our Saviour can not possibly be the Church which He came on earth to found.

Finally, the Church is apostolic because Christ entrusted His teaching to the apostles in all its integrity, appointing them to be the rulers of His Church. The Church of Christ must, therefore, necessarily be apostolic; that Church is clearly so which, like the Catholic Church, can trace her

origin back to the apostles, and which, having its doctrine founded on apostolic tradition, can count as her rulers the legitimate successors of the apostles.

One, holy, catholic, and apostolic, these four marks are not selected at random, but are the very essence and substance of the Church, and were adduced when it was still in its infancy at the second Council of Constantinople. All four marks were imprinted by our Saviour Himself on His Church. We have need of no others, for these are easy to recognize; they can not be obliterated, nor are they capable of being counterfeited by false imitators. No Church, for instance, can alter the date of its birth, making itself more ancient than it is. Let us lift up our eyes to the city seated on the mountain which can not be hid; to the sign set for all generations. There and there alone is the true Church founded by Jesus Christ. To that Church we will be faithful, following its teaching in life and in death, until it bring us safely to heaven for all eternity. Amen.

## SERMON LI

### The Catholic Church as the True Church

*"I believe in the Holy Catholic Church"*

When our Saviour founded His Church He gave it four marks by which it may be known: It is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. Among all the numberless churches in the world, one and one only bears upon it these marks, and this is the Roman Catholic Church to which we belong. We will to-day, with the help of the Holy Spirit, consider in what way these four marks stand out so clearly apparent in the Holy Catholic Church.

I. The Unity of the Church.—The Church is obviously one. When we look on the countenance of our holy Mother the Church we recognize at once one distinctive character with which Christ Himself adorned her who is His bride—unity. She is one in her head. Ask Catholics, from the highest to the lowest, where is the head of the Church, and they will all give the same answer: At Rome, on the chair of Peter—the Pope. He is called Father by all; his voice is listened to by all, even by those who have never seen him.

He is one in faith. As soon as I know that a man belongs to the Holy Catholic faith I know at once what he believes—all that God has revealed and that the holy Catholic Church proposes to our belief. No matter how they vary as to age, language, instruction, knowledge, intelligence—as regards their faith Catholics are all

agreed. It was said of the early Christians that they were of one heart; and where belief is concerned it can still be said of Catholics that they are of one heart and one faith.

But our unity has deeper roots still. The members of the Catholic Church assemble every Sunday and holy-day round the altar to assist at the self-same sacrifice; and all through their lives they seek and find support and strength for their souls from the same divine sources offered them by the Church, namely, the seven sacraments.

Just as it is clear that the holy Catholic Church is one, so is it equally clear that to all other churches this unity is wanting. Where the various sects have split off from the Church of Christ we find that earthly kings and princes have taken upon themselves the office of Church rulers; so that we have as many heads of churches as there are States and nations. There is no community of faith or of sacraments. They dispute amongst themselves as to which books do and do not belong to Holy Scripture; whether there be one, two, or three sacraments, or no sacraments at all; whether Christ is God, or whether He was merely a man. These discussions go on, and there is no one who has authority to decide the points under discussion. The longer the argument continues the more heated it becomes, and the more apparent it also appears that the unity which the real Bride of Christ bears as an emblem of glory on her forehead is entirely wanting to them.

II. The Holiness of the Church.—The Church bears upon itself the mark of holiness, which means that it has power to make holy all who

follow its teaching. Where holiness dwells sin can not exist, and the Catholic Church neither allows nor defends sin, but forbids it with stringent severity. Holiness demands the exercise of every good, and there is no virtue which the Catholic Church does not recognize, praise, glorify, and hold up to us for our imitation—humility, purity, patience, charity, penance, the love of God. The Church pronounces no man a saint till it is proved that he has practised virtue to an heroic degree. Now, holiness is not the work of man, but of God and of God's grace; and in the Church means are not wanting to help men on the road to holiness, to sustain them when they fall, to strengthen them when they are weak, to encourage them when they feel downcast and despairing. Think of the sacraments that are daily administered in the Church: Baptism, Confirmation, Penance, and the Most Blessed Sacrament, the bread of life.

Not only does the Church offer to all the means of holiness, she has in point of fact sanctified and made holy hundreds and thousands. "The queen stood on thy right hand in gilded clothing" (*Ps.* xliv. 11). So said King David in the Psalms. The king is Christ and the queen is His bride, the Church; and her vesture of gold represents the multitudes of saints and of martyrs dyed red in their own blood, of virgins in their lily innocence and purity, of penitents, confessors, hermits, and the whole host of saints radiant in the glory of their virtue and holiness. In many instances so great was their sanctity that God bestowed on them while still on this earth the gift of miracles

and after they were dead preserved their bodies miraculously from corruption. Is that Church, then, not holy that forbids sin and enjoins goodness, strengthening those who are weak in the path of virtue, and bringing so many of her children sanctified and made perfect to God to give Him glory for all eternity?

It is sometimes objected that many Catholics are bad—just as bad as the worst in other religions. That certainly can not be denied, but is the holiness of the Church of God blotted out because some of its members are not and do not wish to be holy? Should we necessarily count a teacher incompetent because a few of his pupils, whether from incapacity, laziness, or inattention, make no progress? I hardly think so. Again, it is argued that in other religious bodies outside the Catholic Church we find just as many men and women leading upright, honorable, and blameless live as in the true fold of Christ. Quite so, but this has no special significance. There is human as well as divine goodness; natural as well as supernatural virtue. In attempting the ascent of a great mountain, we find that its lower stages can be reached by women, children, and every one. There are even hills of no inconsiderable height, the summits of which are accessible to all persons who are not actual invalids. Good roads, experienced guides, sure-footed mules and horses, carriages and electric railways will convey us almost to the very top. Such an ascent can not be considered any great achievement. But only the boldest and bravest and most heroic souls can attempt to scale the snow-capped peaks, where

far from human aid they walk with only the ice under their feet and precipices yawning on every side. The path of honor and right-mindedness which is, so to speak, the public highway of life, is indeed filled with jostling crowds of people of all religions. But raise your eyes to the heights and summits of sanctity which the blessed martyrs and such numbers of saints have attained; look at their contempt of all worldly things, the humility which kept them steady and practical at so high an altitude of holiness, the zeal which no exertion or effort could exhaust or diminish. Who do you discern walking in those regions? You will find there only the chosen souls of the Catholic Church.

III. The Church is Catholic, or Universal.—Our Church is Catholic, and Catholic means universal. The Church founded by Christ must be universal; it must be constantly seeking to spread over the whole earth, in accordance with the divine commission: "Go ye into the whole world and teach the Gospel to every creature." The Catholic Church bears evidently this mark upon it. In the earliest centuries it found its way to every country of the Roman empire. Then came the great migration of nations. Races up to then unknown pressed westward over the frontiers of the great empire inundating the Roman provinces and becoming possessed of Germany, France, Italy, Spain, and Africa. The Church of Christ undismayed once more took up its apostolic work and converted the world for the second time, reaching in its labors for souls as far as the sword of the conqueror and keeping pace with the greed

of the merchant and the ambition of the explorer. Where they led the Church went with them, or soon followed, carrying with it the hope and salvation of the world, the light of the Gospel.

The word Catholic, or universal, does not only mean that the Church must continually strive to extend its boundaries, it also signifies that the Church of Christ subsists in all ages, from the days of Christ up to the present time, and continually. It must be evident, and clear to the meanest capacity, that if a Church claims to be the true Church founded by Christ it must of necessity have existed continuously from the time of Christ up to the present day. Now let us question all religious bodies of every description as to their age, the length of their existence, the date of their establishment. Our Church can make but the one answer: "History shows me to have existed unbrokenly since Christ." It has been already pointed out to you that we count our years with reference to the birth of Christ, but as regards the age of the Church we consider that the first seed was sown at the choosing of the twelve apostles; that the foundation stone was laid when Christ designated St. Peter as the rock on which it was to be built. It came to birth when out of the side of the Saviour flowed water and blood; it received its baptism when in the form of fire the Holy Ghost descended upon the apostles. Since that time the Church has never ceased, in spite of hatred, persecution, and contempt, to live and flourish. Now, what length of life can the other Churches boast of? What does their cer-

tificate of birth claim for them? When was their beginning? Three hundred years—1000 years—1800 years—after Christ. But on their own showing they can not pretend to have been founded by our Saviour. One can reply to them what St. Irenaeus replied to the heresies of his day: "You have come too late."

IV. The Church is Apostolic.—The true Church must be apostolic. Now the Catholic Church can claim to be this in every sense because its records and history go back to the times of the apostles, its doctrines agree with their teaching, and it is governed by a Pope and bishops who are their lawful and direct successors. I can give you a practical illustration of the truth of this. I am your pastor sent to you by my bishop—now to whom did he succeed? He succeeded to his predecessor. We can follow the chain in this way, till we get back to the very first bishop, whom we will find to be an apostle empowered by Christ; thus the first link of our chain is in the hands of the Saviour Himself. Now in other religions this can not be so, for if we retrace our steps to their first beginning we come face to face not with an an apostle, but with some man, who at one time or another broke the chain, opening the links, and severing all the bonds of unity. There is nothing apostolic either in their history, their teaching, or their authority.

The Catholic Church is the only true Church, and this fact carries with it the most weighty consequences.

The first is, that we can never thank God sufficiently for having made us its children. We are

ungrateful, indeed, if we have no feelings of gratitude for such a blessing.

Secondly, it follows, that it is by no means a matter of indifference which Church we belong to. Truth and error can never be equal; pure gold and pinchbeck are not of the same value. We can not walk at the same time on the right and the wrong road.

Thirdly, we are bound to give evidence in our lives and by our actions of our belief in the one true Church. If you really thank God for the privilege of belonging to His Church, do not send your children to schools where all religions are looked upon as equal; do not contract a mixed marriage. How can you hope to live in the closest communion on earth, and yet reach heaven by different roads?

Further, it behooves us to pray fervently for all those outside the true fold, that they may come in the end to embrace the true Church. Prayer can do more than argument and reasoning. Let us pray fervently, then, that the city seated on the mountain, the sign set for all generations, may be visible to the whole of mankind.

More than all, if we be really children of the true Church, we must obey her as a child obeys its mother; believing what she teaches, and doing what she commands. So, guided and sustained by her hand, we shall reach eternal life. Amen.

## SERMON LII

### The Ends and the Endowment of the Church

*"I believe in the Holy Catholic Church"*

OF THE numerous Churches and religious bodies existing in the world, only one can be the true Church; for Christ founded but one Church, providing it from its foundation with certain special marks, by which throughout the centuries it is and will always remain clearly recognizable. These marks are every one to be found in the Catholic Church, and they are present in no other.

This certainty affords us great consolation, and should spur us on in our endeavors to obtain a complete and intimate knowledge of the constitution and workings of our holy Church.

The best way to succeed in knowing and understanding anything is first to learn what is its object, and to what use it is meant to be put. Many things derive their names from the objects they are intended to serve. A spoon, for instance, for use at table is called a tablespoon; a knife that is used for carving is called a carving-knife, etc.; so in order that we may come to understand the Church better, let us ask ourselves, in the words of the catechism: "Why did Christ found the Church?" The answer will instruct us about two things:

I. The end and aim of the Church.
II. The means by which it accomplishes its end.

"Why did Christ found the Church?" "Christ founded the Church to teach, govern, sanctify, and save all men." Here in a few words we have the mission of the Church, which beginning on earth finds its accomplishment in heaven. Our Saviour loved to describe His Church as a kingdom, and a kingdom, indeed, it is, whose aim and object is to prepare men for their heavenly home, directing, guiding, and leading them on the road that leads to it.

What a stupendous task! In view alone of the immense multitude of souls to be dealt with its magnitude is enormous. "To teach, govern, sanctify, and save all men"—all without exception who till the end of time shall ever come into existence. And this is not the only difficulty of well-nigh insurmountable gravity which the Church has to encounter in fulfilling her mission.

When we consider in themselves the souls whom she is commissioned to guide and save, men so self-willed and self-sufficient, so insubordinate and full of pride that they will follow nothing but their own opinions, and be led only by their own passions and inclinations, we may well feel that the task is an impossible one.

Again, the difficulties of the work the Church has to do strike us forcibly when we try to realize what the dangers are through which men are to be guided. Their hearts are to be drawn away from this alluring world which binds them by so many ties to love it, and to take delight in its pleasures.

Further, we have to take into consideration the end toward which the Church is trying to lead

them. It is heaven, which they have never seen, which seems so far above them, and which, as the Gospel tells us, we can not make our own unless we take it by storm: "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent bear it away" (*Matt.* xi. 12).

It is a heavy and overwhelming burden indeed, this mighty undertaking, which, entrusted as it is to the Church, and to the Church only, can not be shirked or the responsibility of it thrust onto other shoulders.

But how supreme and sublime a mission! Where can we find on earth another community or body which has been called to a vocation so exalted and grand. You may talk of the functions of the State. No doubt the work that has to be done by the State is very arduous and difficult; but the State is concerned with the temporal welfare, the earthly happiness of its subjects, and certainly that implies a great deal; but beyond that it does not go. Note on how much higher a plane is the work of the Church. As far as heaven is above earth, so far is the sacred mission of the Church to mankind raised above that obligation by which States and nations are bound to secure the well-being and greater good of those under their jurisdiction.

II

Christ did not lay on His Church the heavy responsibility and burden of so high and noble a mission without providing it fully with the necessary powers, and placing in its hands the weapons needful to enable it to accomplish the end He had

in view. Whoever launches a ship intending that it should sail across the ocean and come safely into harbor on the other side of the world will not merely push the bare vessel out to sea; he will also fit it out and furnish it in many ways: First, a compass is an absolute necessity to steer by; then there must be sails or else a powerful steam-engine to propel the boat through the water; an experienced captain and crew to direct it; and provisions must be provided to ensure them against hunger and thirst. If an army goes out determined to defeat a powerful enemy it could hardly take the field with empty hands; it would be sure to be well equipped with powerful and effective arms. Everything requires to be specially prepared and made ready for the particular purpose it is destined to serve.

Now, what steps did Christ our Lord take to ensure that His Church shall be enabled to do that which He requires of it, and fulfill the difficult mission He has laid upon it. He endowed it with powers of a very special nature, by which it is rendered capable of performing three very important offices to the human race: the teaching office, the priestly office, and the pastoral office.

The Teaching Office.—In order to attain eternal life it is before all things essential to believe all that God has revealed: "He that believeth not shall be condemned" (*Mark* xvi. 16). Now if the Church has the responsibility of leading mankind to heaven it is necessary that it should be in a position to put before men what God's revelation to His creatures has been. For this reason is it empowered to teach: "Going, therefore,

teach ye all nations" (*Matt.* xxviii. 19); "Preach the Gospel to every creature," ". . . You shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem . . . and even to the uttermost parts of the earth" (*Acts* i. 8). There is no doubt that Christ has appointed His Church to be our teacher.

THE PRIESTLY OFFICE.—Without the help of God's grace we can not reach heaven. It is an impossibility. When Elias, journeying at the command of God to Mount Horeb, nearly died on the way of want and hunger God sent him bread and water for his food. The Almighty had called him, therefore He had care of him. Now where can man draw grace for the journey of life? Grace is poured into our souls specially by means of the sacraments; therefore, if the Church is to be our guide and conductor on the road to heaven, it must have power over these sources and well-springs of grace, power to preserve, guard, and dispense them, to open or close them: "Baptize ye all nations" (*Mark* xxviii. 19). "Whose sins ye shall forgive they are forgiven" (*John* xx. 23). "This do for the commemoration of Me" (1 *Cor.* xi. 24). In truth Christ entrusted the priestly office to the Church.

THE PASTORAL OFFICE.—If the Church is deputed to lead men to eternal life, then it must also be entitled to make rules and regulations directing them as to the way they are to walk, and the paths they are to avoid; it must have power to punish those who go against its orders, and even to expel and exclude from its ranks those who are stiff-necked in their disobedience. This authority vested in the Church by Christ is an

essential part of the power necessary to it, if it is to accomplish its divine mission: "Feed my lambs, feed my sheep" (*John* xxi. 15-17); "Whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed also in heaven" (*Mark* xviii. 18). The angel Raphael could not have ventured to constitute himself the guide of the youthful Tobias to the city of the Medes had the latter not undertaken to follow his guidance, leaving it to him to determine the road by which they were to travel. "I have often walked through all the ways thereof" (*Tob.* v. 8). Here was indeed a guide to be relied on; He knew the way. "I will conduct him thither and bring him back to thee" (*Tob.* v. 15). He accepted the charge and faithfully performed all that he set out to do; and Tobias on his side was a faithful disciple, attentive to every sign from his guide, and fully meriting by his docility the joy and happiness which the archangel was the means of bringing to him.

Christ appointed the Church to the three-fold office of teacher, priest, and shepherd. How richly endowed is the bride of Christ! From her lips flows the stream of divine truth; her heart is the spring from which wells up the fountain of divine grace; and in her hands she holds the staff which points the way to eternal life.

But Christ has done even greater things yet for His Church; things which give to all the rest their real value and from which they receive, so to speak, their heavenly radiance and luster. He promised that the Holy Ghost would abide with

His Church always, to support it in the functions of its three-fold office. Viewed by this light how wonderful and marvelous is the part the Church plays to the human race! It teaches under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and is, therefore, infallible; its priesthood is supported by the Holy Spirit, and can, therefore, never die out; it carries the grace of God to man in vessels that will never break or be exhausted or become polluted. Its sacraments remain forever valid. The stream of mercy and grace will flow unceasingly and never run dry. In performing the office of shepherd its arm and staff are guided and upheld by the Spirit of God. It can not err or go astray, and all who follow it will attain the blessed and holy heights of eternal life. Amen.

## SERMON LIII

### The Infallibility of the Catholic Teaching

*"I believe in the Holy Catholic Church"*

Our discourse last week showed us that Jesus entrusted to His Church the sublime mission of leading all mankind to salvation; and we further saw that in laying this great charge upon it our Saviour at the same time endowed His Church with marvelous powers and privileges to enable it to carry out His directions and to fit it for the three-fold office of teacher, priest, and shepherd.

In the exercise of this three-fold office it is upheld and assisted by the Holy Ghost, whom Christ specifically promised to His Church, and whose presence gives to its teaching a special quality and characteristic. We learn in the catechism that "The Church can not err when it teaches a doctrine of faith or morals"; in other words, that the Church as a teaching body is infallible. It will be our object to-day to inquire and examine closely what this doctrine of infallibility exactly consists in.

The teaching body of the Church is composed of the Pope and the bishops. Instruction is, no doubt, also given from the pulpit by individual priests, but they teach only as auxiliaries and in the name of the particular bishop who sent them. Though they teach they do not belong to what is known as the teaching body proper, which is composed exclusively of the Pope and the bishops. It

is this teaching body that claims to be secured from error in doctrines of faith or morals, or in other words to be infallible. The doctrines of faith teach us what we must believe, and the doctrines of morals what we must do, to obtain life everlasting.

In connection with the infallibility of the Church as regards doctrines of faith there are two points to be specially considered:

I. The source of this infallibility.

II. Through what instrumentality, or by whose mouth, this infallible teaching teaches us.

I. The Source of Infallibility.—The Church is infallible in the exercise of its office of teacher of mankind because it rejoices in the assistance and support of the Holy Ghost, that Spirit who, knowing all things, can neither be in error itself, or lead us into error. The foundation stone, the deep well-spring and source of the Church's infallibility, is the assistance and support of the Holy Spirit. But how can we be so sure that the Church really does possess a privilege and blessing of such infinite worth? We feel this assurance because we rely on the promises of Jesus Christ. Let us first call to mind who Jesus Christ is. He is the Son of God, omniscient, almighty, unfailingly faithful. Sooner shall heaven and earth pass away than His word, once given, come to nought or be frustrated. Now listen to the words of Jesus Christ, founder of the Church and bridegroom of the bride; words spoken by the bridegroom to His bride at that solemn moment when He was leaving this earth: "Going, therefore,

teach ye all nations . . . and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (*Matt.* xxviii. 19, 20). This means that Jesus is ever present to inspire and uphold the teachings of His Church and to support and assist it. How, then, could it err in its doctrines? I think you will agree that such a thing is an utter impossibility.

Our Saviour made yet another promise: "I will ask the Father and He shall give you another Paraclete, that He may abide with you forever, the Spirit of truth" (*John* xiv. 16, 17). Our Saviour promised to intercede for His Church and His prayer was granted; and the Holy Ghost, coming down on it, now abides with it forever. Animated by the Holy Spirit of God, is it conceivable that the Church could err in the doctrines she formulates and teaches? It is impossible; we feel that it is so, and that therefore the Church as a teaching body must be infallible.

We come to the same conclusion by recalling the Saviour's words to St. Peter: "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (*Matt.* xvi. 16). If, then, hell is never to prevail against the Church, how can that Church ever be in error in matters of belief? It can be persecuted and has indeed suffered much oppression; it can be despoiled of its possessions, which has actually come to pass; its members, and even its heads and rulers, can transgress the laws of God, and make themselves guilty of grievous sin; but it is an impossibility that the Church should ever teach false doctrines, for then, indeed, the

gates of hell would have prevailed against it, and this can never be.

See how deeply rooted is the infallibility of the Church, resting as it does on the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and the support of Christ our Lord, blessings promised to her, not once, but three times over, by the lips of the Son of God Himself.

If the Church is infallible in its teaching, then St. Paul rightly points to it as the pillar and ground of truth. It would seem but rational to expect that Catholics, instead of being so anxious to weigh and analyze the opinions of the wise and learned of this world, or to know and be in touch with the latest idea, or to adopt and make their own what appeals to their fancy, should ask: What does the Church, guided by the Holy Spirit, say on the subject? We should imagine that in all disputed matters, both past and present, they would adhere firmly and loyally, without any second thoughts on the subject, to whatever is, or has been, or will be decreed and defined by the teaching body of the Church.

II. Through what Instrumentality does this Infallible Teaching Reach Us?—Here we are confronted with a further difficulty, which is our second point of meditation, namely: through whom, or by whose mouth, does the teaching body of the Church give utterance to her infallible decisions? The catechism asks this same question, saying: "When does the Church teach infallibly?" "The Church teaches infallibly when it speaks through the Pope and the bishops united in general council, or through the Pope alone when

he proclaims to all the faithful a doctrine of faith or morals."

We see, therefore, that such decisions as claim to be infallible can not be made by any single isolated bishop, much less by any individual priest. They can be arrived at only in two ways, either by a general council of the Church or by the Pope alone.

What is meant by a general council of the Church? It is a council presided over either by the Pope himself or by his legate, to which he invites and calls all the bishops of the Church, and the decisions of which are ratified by the sanction of the Holy See. The decrees of such a general council concerning faith and morals are infallible and must, on account of their infallibility, be firmly and unconditionally accepted. These great councils are the grand opportunities and occasions on which the entire teaching body of the Church comes together, Pope with bishops, and bishops with Pope, to formulate their decrees. For many hundreds of years the Church has held these general councils for the deciding of the most important questions, and their decrees have ever been accepted by the faithful with the greatest respect and reverence. Pope Gregory the Great, speaking of the four first councils, said: "I believe and reverence these four general councils as I do the four Gospels." St. Ambrose exhorts the faithful to suffer death sooner than reject their decisions. In point of fact, to assert that a council of the Church is in error on any doctrine concerning faith or morals, is equivalent to saying that the Church has made a mistake and

is not infallible, and once we go that far we must take the next step and say that Christ was under a delusion when He promised the gift of infallibility to His Church; and who ever is of that opinion is no longer a Christian. To withdraw one stone from an arch is often sufficient to bring down the whole structure.

The decrees of a general council of the Church are infallible, but the Pope, also, can formulate alone similar infallible decrees. I should like to call your attention to three things in connection with this power of the Sovereign Pontiff: the first has regard to its limitations, the second to the grounds on which the Holy See claims this power, the third to the objections made against it.

(a) The Limits.—The ocean is vast and often appears boundless, yet almighty God said of it: "I set My bounds around it, and I said, Hitherto thou shalt come and shalt go no further, and here thou shalt break thy swelling waves" (*Job* xxxviii. 10, 11). Papal infallibility has also its limits, and the first of them is set by the person of the Holy Father Himself. Everything spoken or written or decided by the Pope is not infallible, by no means; but only what he says speaking as our teacher or shepherd. Every word uttered by a judge is not a judicial pronouncement, but only what he says in his judicial capacity. Any paper signed by an official is not necessarily an official document, but only those written in an official character in the exercise of official duties. Therefore, when the Pope speaks in virtue of his office of chief teacher and pastor of Christendom, and of successor to St. Peter, then and then only do

his decrees and pronouncements claim to be infallible.

The infallibility of the Pope is further limited by the subject-matter upon which he is pronouncing, for he is not infallible in all matters, but only in questions of faith or morals. There is a legend about one of the ancient Greek heroes to the effect that he was invulnerable in every part of his body; neither dagger, nor sword, nor any other weapon, could wound him, except only in one place, the heel. Now, with the Pope it is the other way about. He can make mistakes in all sorts of things: in his knowledge of people, names, numbers, and places; in making calculations, in history, in geography, in the management of his own affairs and concerns; but there is just one department in which error is impossible to him, namely, in defining and deciding as head and shepherd of all Christians doctrines of faith or morals.

The final limitation to Papal infallibility is afforded by those whom he is addressing. For a decree of the Pope's to be infallible it must be directed, not to one single person, or even to several people; not only to one or more of the bishops, but to all the faithful in the whole world. We find these three limits clearly laid down in the catechism: "The Church teaches infallibly when it speaks through the Pope and the bishops, united in general council, or through the Pope alone when he proclaims to all the faithful a doctrine of faith or morals."

(b) The Foundation.—On what foundations does this doctrine of Papal infallibility rest? At

the last general Vatican Council in Rome, which was held in the year 1870, it was solemnly decreed that within certain and defined limits which we have given you the pronouncements of the Pope were to be considered infallible, and the faithful were called upon to accept them as such. This decision, as we have already stated, settled the question once and for all. The council had been summoned in the regular way, and was attended by an unprecedented number of bishops. The propositions to be discussed and decided upon were clearly laid before them, and all were free to give their vote as they thought right. The decree of Papal infallibility was carried by a large majority, only two bishops pronouncing against it, and they later on became entirely reconciled to it. Therefore, if the decrees of this particular council are to be put aside, the same must apply to the decrees of former councils, and the doctrine of the infallibility of the Church and that of Christ Himself may be rejected and thrown overboard.

Nevertheless, the teaching of this council agrees perfectly with that of Holy Scripture. The gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church, because it is founded on a rock. Now, Peter is the rock. If, then, the Church is infallible, then must the Pope be infallible.

Moreover, Peter and his successors are the shepherds and teachers of the whole Church. Is it conceivable that the Pope can err when he is engaged in teaching the whole Church? In that case, he who should be guiding and directing the flock might be leading it astray; he whose office it

is to shelter and protect it might be urging it on to its destruction. Moreover, our Saviour prayed for Peter that his faith might not fail, and that he might be in a position to confirm his brethren. Was this prayer offered for St. Peter alone? The other apostles were not in special need of being strengthened. The words surely apply as much to the *successors* of St. Peter and the apostles as they do to St. Peter and the apostles themselves; and we have a right to think that the prayer of our Saviour was offered that the faith, not only of St. Peter, but also of all his successors, might never fail. If, therefore, the prayers of our Saviour were heard, the Vicar of Christ can never go astray in matters of faith.

(c) The Objections Raised Against This Doctrine.—The first objection always made is based on a misconception. How can the Pope be infallible? Every human creature is liable to sin and error, and therefore so is the Pope. He prays at the beginning of every Mass: "I have sinned; through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault," and he goes to confession. To say that the Pope is infallible does not mean that he is incapable of sin.

If he were indeed incapable of fault he would no longer belong to the ranks of mere human creatures; he would be like to God. Now the Pope is not infallible like God and incapable of fault. He is so only under certain limited circumstances, and not of himself, but by virtue of the action of the Holy Spirit. Lastly, he is infallible not for his own advantage and interests, but for those of the Church of God. Does it not come within the

scope of God's dealings with mankind to make a man infallible in such a sense as this? He allowed the prophets of old to foresee the future which otherwise is known to Himself alone; He preserved the writers of Holy Scripture from error; He gave to many of the saints the power to work miracles, which is a supernatural gift; finally He has put into the hands of His priests a divine prerogative, the power of forgiving sin. Still all these are capable of offending God.

Again it is often urged that the infallibility of the Pope is a modern invention. This is not so, for the Popes at all times were held to be infallible in the sense indicated. It is only the clear and decided definition of the doctrine that is new. It became a necessity in our day to define the doctrine, because it was being called in question. As long as no one interferes with my right to my possessions, it would be quite superfluous for me to appeal to the decision of a court of law to confirm my title. But if a stranger comes and disturbs my enjoyment of them, claiming what is mine, then I submit my title-deeds and vouchers to a court of law in order to have my position legally defined and secured. So in the case of Papal infallibility, as it is only in the last century that it was ever challenged, it then first became necessary to establish it.

Let us rejoice, dearly beloved brethren, in the infallibility of the teaching of the Church and thank God that we have a judge on whose pronouncements in all that regards faith or morals we can absolutely rely. "Christ," says the apostle St. Paul, "gave pastors and doctors . . . that

henceforth we be no more children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the wickedness of men, by cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive'' (*Eph.* iv. 11, 14). Let us rejoice, for this blessing is for our profit and salvation. It is the lighthouse which in the midst of the restless waves of human opinion, shows the safe course to the harbor of rest and of eternal life. Amen.

## SERMON LIV

### The Communion of Saints

*"I believe in the Holy Catholic Church"*

We have devoted several instructions to considering the Church in its essence and origin, its constitution and various offices, its distinguishing marks, ends, and object. We have seen that it is, as it were, a great kingdom, or a flock and a shepherd; a flock scattered over the whole world, yet guided by one single shepherd to a supernatural and heavenly destination.

If we lift up our eyes higher still we shall see a yet greater kingdom, the communion of saints, of which mention is made in the second part of the ninth article of the Creed: "I believe in the communion of saints."

If we ask what the communion of saints means, the catechism tells us: "The communion of saints means the union which exists between the members of the Church on earth with one another, and with the blessed in heaven, and with the suffering souls in purgatory"—the Church militant, the Church suffering, the Church triumphant.

We will select two points only for our meditation to-day and will consider, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit:

I. What are the component parts which make up the communion of saints?

II. What is the bond by which these parts are united and held together?

I

The communion of saints is composed of souls, who, though all members of the Church, are in three different states of existence. First, there are the faithful on earth, who form the Church militant so long as they are on earth. The members of the Church can not live otherwise than in a state of struggle and warfare. A genuine and sincere Catholic who is honestly trying to attain his end must of necessity be fighting unceasingly against the desires of the spirit and of the flesh, against bad influences and false principles, and all the dangerous circumstances of his journey through this world, as well as the attacks and assaults of the evil spirits. The Church is possessed of all kinds of weapons with which to carry on this warfare; and her children each individually wage it, some with more, some with less, courage, and with very various results. There are sharp weapons and blunt weapons; heroes and cowards; victories and defeats. But, so long as this world exists, so long as this life lasts, the battle must continue.

The communion of saints is further composed of the suffering souls in purgatory. Their battle is over and won, but their triumph is delayed till their wounds are healed, and they have expiated, by suffering, the sins they have been guilty of, and completed the punishment due to them. No one can say what the number of these souls may be, but we may safely conjecture that it is very great indeed.

The last and highest division of the communion of saints is formed by the blessed in heaven. Not

only is their time of strife over, but they are already crowned as conquerors with crowns of incorruptible beauty. They form, as it were, a continual triumphal progress round the throne of the Lamb, giving Him thanks for the grace of victory: "I saw a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues" (*Apoc.* vii. 9). And what a glorious throng they form, the members of the Church triumphant, with the Mother of God at their head, and all the blessed apostles, martyrs, confessors, virgins, and hermits in their ranks, which will continue to grow and increase until the last day—the Church triumphant.

These three different parts—the Church militant, the Church suffering, the Church triumphant—united and joined together in one great whole, as one kingdom, form the communion of saints. How vast, how high, how deep, how great! and we, too, each one of us, form part of it! Yet how can a kingdom which includes so many sinners in its ranks be called the communion of saints? Why such an appellation when it numbers among its members men who are in no sense saints, but who have sinned, and are sinning now, and will go on sinning? Notwithstanding this, this communion is rightly termed the communion of saints. The blessed in heaven are saints; the souls in purgatory, having died in a state of grace, are also saints; the members of the Church militant are all without exception called to be saints, and if they are deserving of even the faintest shadow of this name they must feel within them at least the aspiration, the desire, the resolve to become

saintly. In this sense they may be called saints, and it is with this meaning that St. Paul, without hesitation, so addressed the members of the Christian community to whom he was writing, "the saints at Ephesus," and so on. We ourselves belong to the communion of saints. This name, which is in itself a whole sermon, ought to act as a spur, an incitement. Shall we not, each one of us, endeavor to do credit to it, and strive to be in reality what it implies? If any one should give himself out to be a painter without either being able to paint or having the least idea of learning, he would be making himself thoroughly ridiculous. O dearly beloved brethren, we belong to the communion of saints! We are not saints, but at least let us excite in our hearts the earnest wish and desire to become so.

II

Now that we have seen what makes up the communion of saints, it still remains for us to know what is the bond that holds these divisions together, making them as one whole.

It is an invisible and spiritual bond that joins them, for the union is an invisible union. It is the three-fold bond of thought, of deeds, and of being united under a common head.

The Bond of Thought.—If we begin with the Church triumphant, it is quite certain that the thoughts of the blessed in heaven often go back to those whom they have left behind them here below. This earth was their battlefield; it was here they fought and won their victory, and where the foundations of their sanctity were laid. Will

they have no sympathy with us, who have come forward to fill their places in the ranks, to face and withstand the same foe? Yes, surely, they take the keenest interest in us, just as veteran warriors love to live their battles over again, going back in their minds constantly to former engagements, and counting up their deeds of valor with the marches accomplished and the victories won. The thoughts of the blessed in heaven are often turned in the same way, I feel sure, to the holy souls in purgatory. Many among them have themselves experienced the purifying flames, and, even were it not so, surely it seems only right that those souls who, free from every stain are rejoicing in complete blessedness, should remember their brethren who still linger in sorrow and suffering. If, even in this life, when we are in luck ourselves, it is considered despicable and mean to forget friends who are down in the world, with how much greater force would this principle apply in heaven?

The thoughts of the souls in purgatory must dwell a great deal, almost uninterruptedly, with the blessed in heaven, for there is their home, the object of all their hopes and longings. They look, without doubt, frequently, also to us below who are bound to them by so many ties—it may be of blood and friendship; but, at least, by the bond of a common faith and by the self-same hopes; sometimes, alas, by the bond of sin!

And we who still sojourn in this vale of temptation and tears turn our thoughts and eyes, I will not say frequently or even continuously, but at least from time to time, toward heaven, and to

the souls in purgatory. Can any believing Christian fail to think occasionally of the destination toward which he is hurrying? And, if such thoughts do not come to us naturally and of themselves, the Church takes care to bring them to our minds on the feast of All Saints and the Commemoration of the Holy Souls.

But mere thoughts, even though they be earnest and frequent, are still but a feeble bond of union. The web of the spider stretches from tree to tree or from wall to wall, but it takes very little to destroy it. The Church militant, triumphant, and suffering is not united only by the bond of thought; it is knit firmly together by the more powerful link of mutual help and influence.

What can the action and influence be which we can bring to bear upon the saints? We can pay them honor, as the friends of God, and victorious combatants, ornaments of the Church, our examples and models, our patrons and helpers. We erect churches and altars in their memory, in which we expose pictures and images of them; we preserve their relics and pay them reverence; we invoke their powerful intercession, so often and with so much confidence, that our enemies have made it a reproach to us. This action and influence is not one-sided. While we, on our part, honor and pray to the saints, they assist us by interceding powerfully for us with God. If the prayer of the just man avails much, then surely the prayers of not only one, but of many or all the saints, the prayer of the Mother of God, must be of immeasurable value.

What effort and exertion can we make to help

the souls in purgatory? The Church teaches very explicitly that we can help them by prayer, almsgiving, and other good works, and especially by the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Does any one dare to say: "We know we could help, but we do not trouble to do it"? Oh, certainly more, much more, might be done, but, even as it is, who can count the prayers, the good works, the Masses, that are offered up daily and hourly in the Church militant for the suffering souls. A stream of refreshment flows from this earth to the souls in purgatory, a stream which, although sometimes stronger, sometimes weaker, has never entirely failed and run dry. And, if there is on earth enough pity and sympathy to keep this stream flowing, shall we doubt that from the Church triumphant in heaven a mighty river of intercession is continually poured out in supplications for those friends of God? We may be sure that the holy souls are grateful, and that for this alleviation of their sufferings they will sooner or later make a generous return.

By what means are the members of the Church militant able to help each other? We are so widely scattered over the world, separated by oceans and continents, multitudes of us never having seen each other or even heard each others' names. Under these circumstances what influence can we have, one on the other? It is a fact that all the members of the Church militant form together one whole, the mystical body of Christ; and is it not true that the members of the same body affect each other to a very great extent? If the sight of the eye be good the foot is able to tread more

securely and the hand to grasp more firmly. The quality of our blood and its circulation through our veins depends in great measure on the quality of the food we eat and are able to digest, and one can go on extending the simile almost indefinitely. Now, the same thing takes place in the mystical body of Christ, the Church militant. The prayers, the works of penance, the continual suffering of such numbers of good Christians, the daily offering of the Holy Sacrifice, though certainly benefiting primarily those who actually do these good works, exercise an influence over the whole Church, and have an effect particularly on those who are in a state of grace. It is, indeed, a matter for rejoicing that we are members of this powerful, grace-infusing mystical body.

Finally, the Church militant, suffering, and triumphant is bound together through submission to one common head, who is no other than Jesus Christ. He is the sovereign Lord of the saints, the invisible head of the Church, king and judge of the suffering souls in purgatory, and all are united together in Him. This forms a powerful tie, which has endured for long ages and has never yet been broken, thus joining together the three divisions of the Church, to make one kingdom under one sovereign King. Dearly beloved brethren, may we never forget that we are members of it. Let us work mercy to the poor souls in purgatory by praying for them, and armed with the weapons which the Church militant puts into our hands let us fight after the example of our holy patrons, the saints, and we, too, shall one day attain to the glory of the Church triumphant in heaven. Amen.

## SERMON LV

### Death

*"It is appointed unto men, once to die"* (*Heb.* ix. 27).

Having brought our instructions on the ninth article of the Creed to a close, we should now, if we continued to take the articles in regular order, pass on to the consideration of the tenth article: "I believe in the forgiveness of sins," but later on, when we come to the explanations of the various sacraments, particularly those of Baptism and Penance, we shall have better opportunities of dwelling on this power of the Church to forgive sin and its penalties. So we will now go on at once to the eleventh article: "I believe in the resurrection of the body."

The resurrection of the body is the coming together again of the soul and the body which had been separated by death. We will begin our discourses on this article of the Creed by asking two questions concerning death:

I. What does death do and what effect does it have?

II. What are its characteristics?

I

What effect does death produce? What results does it bring about? It divides and it determines. It separates from every link with earthly things, tearing a man away from all his goods and possessions, however many, or few, or beloved they

may be. All that is left to him is a couple of boards, which enclose his dead body, and a few feet of earth to make his grave. All feeling of joy and delight in life vanishes, and is replaced by the bitterness, the pains, the fears, that hover round a deathbed. How insipid the pleasures of this world appear at that moment! Death divides us from any reputation we had acquired and enjoyed here below. Sooner or later we hear of even the most famous among men: he is sick, he is dying, he is dead, he is buried—the bell rings, the obituary notices sound his praises, his name and title are inscribed on his gravestone, and in a few weeks, or a few months, at the latest, he is forgotten, quite forgotten. By death man is cut off from all means of grace. His opportunities of merit, repentance, and penance are over. Finally, the union which has lasted so long between soul and body and which bound man so closely together is dissolved. His powers of hearing are dulled, the eyes become sightless, speech fails, the lungs can no longer draw breath, the heart ceases to beat, the soul leaves the body, the body is dead, it has become a corpse. But death's work of separation is not yet ended. Barely has dissolution taken place when the ally of death, corruption, takes possession of the body and begins to divide the flesh from the bones and to dismember the limbs. The moisture of the soil claims its share, the earth also demands a portion, the worms crave theirs; and so it goes on till there is nothing left but a handful of dried up and crumbling bones: "Doth bitter death separate in this manner?" (1 *Kings* xv. 32.) Is this really

all that remains? When the people of Israel found in the streets only a skull and a handful of bones as all that was left of the proud and haughty Queen Jezabel they cried out: "Is this that same Jezabel?" that proud, haughty, painted, and bedizened woman! Can this be all that remains of her! My God, is that all that will be left of us, a handful of earth, a few scattered and dried up bones!

But death not only separates and destroys, it decides and determines. Death is the entrance to eternity, the door which opens onto the judgment-seat of God. The moment of our death decides our eternal destiny, for, as the tree falls, so shall it lie. This, therefore, is what death does: it divides the soul from everything earthly, and determines its eternal destiny.

II

We must also cast a glance at the characteristics of death. It is

(1) Certain. "It is appointed unto men once to die" (*Heb.* ix. 27). The law of death came into force with the first sin, and it holds good the whole world over for all men at all times. No king or emperor can repeal it; God alone, who made it, has power over it. The inevitableness of the law of death is brought home to us by experience, and is constantly recalled and impressed on our minds: funeral bells seem to say, "You, too, you must die"—the hearse, the churchyard, the tombstones, the mortuary card, all repeat "dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return."

(2) Death itself is certain, but, on the other

hand, its accompanying circumstances are wrapped in uncertainty and mystery. Where shall you die, and when? During the day or in the night? Will it find you prepared or unprepared? Can you, or I, or any one, tell?

(3) In all this uncertainty we are told by the Saviour that only one thing is certain. Death will come like a thief in the night. A thief does not choose the early evening hours for his visit; he steals in late, in the darkness of the night, not by the hall door, but at the window or down through the roof. He carries no light in his hand and does not knock, but creeps in as silently as possible. He will be there, have done his business, and have disappeared before any one has noticed his presence. So it is that death will come upon us. It surprises youth, that counts securely on a long life; old age, that thinks to live a couple of years longer; the sick man, who with his doctor and all his friends persuades himself he is not so very ill; that when the cough gets better, when the new medicine takes effect, when the spring comes back bringing better weather, then health also will return to him. But instead it is death that comes. Those who are to-day in full health and strength may be struck down with apoplexy; they may meet with an accident suddenly, by land or sea, on board ship, in the train, or even walking, riding, driving, eating or drinking, awake or asleep. Our Saviour's words are, "like a thief in the night." We shall die without warning, before we have time to expect it.

(4) Once come, death will not be kept waiting. It can not be put off from one day or month to

another like other matters in life. Oh, fearful guest who unfailingly presents himself, and is not to be denied for a single hour or minute! But the most terrible thought of all in connection with death is that it can not be repeated. We die

(5) But once. A spoiled document can be made out and drawn up afresh; a lawsuit lost may be regained, instituted anew on fresh grounds, with further evidence, before a different tribunal. But death can not be repeated. A bad death remains eternally a bad death; a good death is a good death for all eternity.

Such is death, such is its action, such its characteristics. What is the meaning for us of the solemn truths it holds? What does death teach us? By death we shall, perforce, be obliged to leave everything we possess here below. Let us, then, as a preparation for that dread hour, keep our hearts free from false, unjust, unprincipled, and inordinate attachments to anything earthly, be it money, pleasure, or persons; then death will be powerless to hurt us.

The moment of death determines everything for us, so let us have a care that we make a good end. How shall we set about doing this? Let death be our teacher.

If it is certain that death will come, then it is also certain that we must prepare for his coming. Clearly true as this is, it is so easily forgotten that in season and out of season we require to be reminded of it. It is certain that I shall die, and it is equally certain that I must prepare for death.

So deeply hidden from us are all the circum-

stances that will accompany our death, the probability is that it will come upon us as a shock, before we have realized it, and when we are least expecting or thinking of it. To say, "I must prepare," is not putting the case strongly enough —I must be prepared, holding myself in readiness to die, let death come where and when it will. "Wherefore be you also ready because at what hour you know not the Son of man will come" (*Matt.* xxiv. 44). It is not enough for the soldier at his post to have his weapons lying in readiness near him; no, he must stand fully armed, the loaded rifle in his hand, and he dare not lay it aside even for a moment.

Death itself will not be put off, therefore, still less ought the preparation for it to be delayed. "Watch ye, therefore, because you know not the day nor the hour" (*Matt.* xxv. 13). Death can never be repeated; therefore (and what a big therefore!), we must be in readiness, always prepared as carefully as we know how. It is an event on which depends that which can never be put right for all eternity. What good is your life, if it end with a bad death? It had been better for you never to have been born.

Let us begin to die now, at once, saying as we pray: Lord, I submit humbly to the law of death; may I die where and when Thou willest. I submit to this law as a creature, a man made out of the dust of the earth, as a Christian who should walk in the footsteps of his Saviour, as a sinner who has deserved death by his sins. I ask of Thee the grace to die as a Christian with the consolation of the last sacraments; and as one who,

well prepared, has lived constantly in a state of grace. Grant that, looking back on the past with sorrow and confidence, and to the future without fear and full of hope, and holding the crucifix in my dying hands, my last sigh may be: Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, I give you my heart and my soul. Amen.

## SERMON LVI

### The Resurrection of the Body

*"I believe in the Resurrection of the Body"*

DEATH and corruption in the grave is the inevitable fate that awaits our body; and as we consider it, one question forces itself upon us: Is this, then, the end? Will the body remain thus forever the prey of corruption? To this the eleventh article of the Creed answers an emphatic no; the body will not be buried forever in the grave; it will rise again. "I believe in the resurrection of the body."

With the help of the Holy Spirit we will consider the resurrection of the body under three heads:

I. As a fact.
II. In its object.
III. As to its nature and manner.

I

In the ordinary way when one speaks of a fact, one means an event that has already taken place. Now the resurrection of the body, although a fact, is one that will happen only in the distant future, on the last day at the end of all things. It will be the last event to come to pass on the stage of this world.

It is a future fact. A fact generally implies something sure and certain, an event that has already actually occurred. Now nothing is more un-

certain than the future, and the more distant it is the more uncertain it appears. If the resurrection of the body is not to be till the end of all time, it presents itself to us in a very uncertain light, indeed. Nevertheless, it is a sure and stable fact, as you will see by examining closely and taking well to heart the source from which our knowledge of it springs.

Primarily, we know it from the written word of God in the Holy Scriptures. In the Old Testament Job says: "I know that my Redeemer liveth and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth, and I shall be clothed again with my poor skin, and in my flesh I shall see God. Whom I myself shall see, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. This my hope is laid up in my bosom" (*Job* xix. 25-27). The marvelous sight witnessed by the prophet Ezechiel is clearly a figure of the general resurrection. A wide plain covered with bones was shown to him. "Son of man, dost thou think these bones shall live?" The prophet answered: "O Lord God, Thou knowest." God then commanded him to speak to the bones and say: "Ye dry bones, hear ye the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God to these bones, Behold I shall send spirit into you and you shall live . . . and you shall know that I am the Lord." Ezechiel did as he was commanded, and the bones joining together once more became clothed with nerves and sinews and skin; and the spirit animated them, and they stood before him a great army (*Ezech.* xxxvii. 3-10). In the New Testament our Saviour foretold the resurrection of the body in the clearest manner: "I am the resur-

rection and the life" (*John* xi. 25). "The hour cometh when all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that have done good things shall come forth unto the resurrection of life; but they that have done evil unto the resurrection of judgment" (*John* v. 28, 29). Our Saviour was the omniscient God, who sees into the most distant future, and He has already proved to us that He does not lack the power to raise from the dead. He proved it primarily by His own glorious resurrection, and next by restoring to life the daughter of Jairus, who had died in childhood; the widow's son at Naim, who had died in early youth, and Lazarus, who was of riper age. Jairus' daughter was recalled to life by our Saviour while she still lay on her bed of death; the widow's son when his body was on his way to the grave, and Lazarus after three days in the tomb, corruption having actually set in.

The apostle St. Paul gives in his epistles explicit and unequivocal teaching concerning the resurrection of the body, and the Church has always treated belief in this doctrine as one of the fundamental articles of faith. Because of the resurrection which she believes awaits us she treats a dead body with the greatest respect and reverence, invoking benedictions on it, accompanying it to the grave with prayer and hymnody, blessing the grave and setting up upon it the holy sign of the cross. The spot where her deceased children rest she calls, in some part of the world, "God's acre," the field of God, and elsewhere the "cemetery," which means resting-place; and she sees in the dead body the grain of seed that will

one day spring up and put forth bud and blossom. The Day of Judgment is God's harvest-time.

The resurrection of the body, then, is an event still to come, but it is a very sure and stable event, nevertheless. It is one of the very greatest and most wonderful truths of religion, and Jesus Christ, who decreed it, will bring it about by His almighty power when He comes at the end of the world to judge the living and the dead. Very great and wonderful will be this manifestation of the power of the Son of God, embracing in its extent all men who have died before the last day, beginning with Adam down to the last member of the human race. Its results and effects also will be great and wonderful, for the newly-risen will come to life never to taste of death any more; soul and body will be henceforward so closely and intimately united that they will not be separated for all eternity.

The resurrection is a future, a certain, a great, and wonderful fact.

II

Our next point is the reason of such an event as the resurrection of the body. The catechism tells us it is in order that "our bodies should share in the reward or punishment of our souls," and a further reason is that our Saviour's triumph over death should be complete. So here we have a double reason why the body should rise again.

Our body has its part for good or for evil in all that we do, and there is scarcely a good action in which it does not participate. In prayer though

certainly the powers of the soul are principally called into play, still even folding the hands, bending the knee, moving the lips, and the general demeanor of the body enter in some measure into the performance of this duty. Fasting affects chiefly the body; night-watching is also irksome to it; and the fatigue incidental to work and labor, the exertion required to make pious pilgrimages, the endurance of pain and sickness, all are burdens that press heavily on the flesh. It can not be denied that the practice of the beautiful virtues of temperance and chastity need the help of the body. Ruler and leader though the soul may be, the body is nevertheless its fellow-worker and colleague. If, therefore, the body has done its part in the performance of good, it is but just that it should receive a share of the eternal reward. Laurels are not the portion of the leaders of an army exclusively; they are given also to the rank and file who have followed the command. The credit of winning a race is not entirely due to the jockey; he allows a great deal of it to the horse that carried him, just as a brave soldier thanks his good sword which helped him to win the victory.

As with the good we have done, so with the evil. The body vacillates between one and the other. Out of love of the body the soul commits many a sin of omission, of sloth, of carelessness; and the body has power to drag the soul down into a perfect swamp of intemperance and impurity. Surely, then, it should bear its punishment along with the soul. All this furnishes an adequate reason for waking the body from the sleep of the

grave, that it may "share in the reward or punishment of the soul."

The other reason for the resurrection of the body is that Christ's victory over death may be complete. Our Saviour triumphed over death Himself when He arose glorious from the tomb, but if there be no resurrection of the body for those whom He died to redeem then His victory is incomplete and imperfect. Death can taunt Him, saying: "Thou hast conquered me, but not entirely. Thou didst Thyself rise from the tomb, but the bodies of Thy brethren shall not escape from the grave where they lie rotting, and no one has power to rescue them from me." But by raising up to life the bodies of all mankind Christ perfects His victory and can reply: "As Adam has caused the death of all men, so through Me all shall rise again." "O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?" (1 *Cor.* xv. 55). Thou art conquered completely and wholly.

III

Let us cast a glance at the nature and manner of our resurrection. It is hardly necessary to say that our risen bodies will be entirely free from all earthly requirements, needs, and weaknesses; but are we to understand that the bodies of all will be alike in their condition? No; the teaching of St. Paul is that the bodies of the wicked will be wretched and miserable in their vileness, while the elect will shine resplendent and like to the glorified body of Christ. "We shall all indeed rise again, but we shall not all be changed," i. e., glorified (1 *Cor.* xv. 51).

The bodies of the wicked, bearing the marks of sin impressed upon them and branded with the brand of shame and eternal damnation, will be so repulsive in their hideousness that the soul will shudder at returning to such a dwelling-place; and will feel it torment and torture to appear in such a covering before the universal judgment-seat. A convict shrinks from displaying himself handcuffed and attired in prison dress to his fellow-men. I have repeatedly observed these unfortunate people trying with the utmost care to hide the chains that bind their hands. Oh, what must be the feeling of degradation and shame of a sinful body!

The bodies of the just will be resplendent and like to the glorified body of Christ. Glorified, and like to the risen Christ! We are told that the negroes in Africa are flattered if they are thought to resemble Europeans. But to resemble the risen body of Christ! To be like Christ! Radiant with brightness; capable of movement quicker than thought; immortal, and free from illness, sorrow, or death! O dearly beloved brethren, consider each of you your body! Maybe it is old, decayed, enfeebled, with one foot in the grave. What does it matter? We have no reason to fear death like them that have no hope. Your body will die—but it will rise again. Perhaps it is racked with a terrible cough, tortured with gout, and suffering from many other disorders. In the resurrection it will be immortal and free from all infirmity; it may now be crippled, ugly, and deformed—it will then become transformed, and made like to

the body of Christ in everlasting strength and youth.

Dearly beloved brethren, we must honor our body, using it here below as an instrument to help us in our work; to make us zealous, patient, temperate, chaste, and contrite; then in the resurrection it will become to us an abode of peace, a garment of distinction, a vessel of honor, a source of rejoicing for all eternity. Amen.

## SERMON LVII

### Purgatory

*"Life everlasting. Amen"*

In considering the eleventh article of the Creed we dwelt particularly on the effects of death, and on what becomes of the body afterward. We saw that corruption in the grave would be our portion till the general resurrection at the last day.

We now enter upon the study of the twelfth, and last article of the Creed, and the first thing we learn from the catechism in connection with it is, that "God will judge us immediately after our death." This is known as the particular judgment, and is to be distinguished from the general judgment dealt with in the seventh article. What constitutes the difference between the particular and the general judgment? First, the time at which each will take place. The general judgment will not be held till the last day, but the particular judgment will be "immediately after death." Further, the purpose of each will be different. At the general judgment all mankind, from every part of the world, will be present, body and soul, and all will be judged simultaneously—the particular judgment will be held specially for every separate person, as soon as each individual soul has left its body. But the principal difference lies in the sentence which may be pronounced on us. At the general judgment there will be but two

alternatives—heaven or hell. At the particular judgment there is a third possibility, for the catechism tells us: "The rewards or punishments appointed for men's souls after the particular judgment are heaven, purgatory, and hell."

These three places, or states, which await the soul after death, will be the subject of our last three discourses on the Apostles' Creed.

To-day we will consider purgatory, invoking first the help of the Holy Spirit.

I. The existence of purgatory.
II. What souls go to purgatory.

I

Is there really a purgatory, namely, a place where souls not yet entirely pure go to be cleansed from sin and to complete the punishment due to them? There is, indeed: Holy Scripture, tradition, and the constant teaching and practice of the Church tell us that it is so.

The opponents of the doctrine of purgatory are never tired of saying that there is no authority for it in Holy Scripture. No doubt you will fail to find the actual word "purgatory" in the pages of the Bible, but even the Old Testament contains ample teaching on what is represented by that word. The books of Machabees, in which is written the history of the last heroes of Jewish times, relate that they fought bravely and victoriously against the kings of Syria. In the course of these wars their leader, Judas Machabeus, a God-fearing man, engaged in a bloody campaign against certain Pagan races, and some few Jews were killed in battle. When Judas returned after

the Sabbath to view the battlefield and give the dead honorable burial he found concealed amongst their clothing various idols made of gold and silver, which they must have stolen a few days before at the taking and plundering of a certain Pagan city. Now, by the Jewish laws it was strictly forbidden to keep idols or anything appertaining to the worship of idols. The fallen soldiers, therefore, had sinned grievously, and that shortly before their death, and their sin was so much the more serious because they had committed it while engaged in a war having for its object to uphold the law of God. Nevertheless, Judas Machabeus believed that their souls would be saved. How could this be? They fell following a gallant leader, in a good cause, fighting for God and His law. It was a beautiful death and Judas believed a glorious reward awaited them for it in the world to come. On the one side we have their sin, on the other their glorious death. There was much to fear from the one, much to hope from the other. Now Judas, instead of taking for granted that they would be lost forever on account of their sin, believed that they had gone to a place where they stood in need of help and were in a condition to benefit by it. He therefore collected 12000 drachmas which he sent to Jerusalem that a sacrifice might be offered to obtain the remission of their sin. It is evident, therefore, that not only Judas, but the soldiers who helped to contribute the money, as well as the priests who received it and offered the sacrifice, believed in a place of expiation. This belief has the sanction of Holy Scripture, for the rela-

tion of this incident closes in the following words: "It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from their sins" (2 *Mach.* xii. 46).

We can prove from the New Testament, also, that there is a purgatory. In one of the parables our Saviour said: "And when thou goest with thy adversary to the prince, whilst thou art in the way endeavor to be delivered from him, lest perhaps he draw thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the exactor, and the exactor cast thee into prison. I say to thee, thou shalt not go out thence until thou pay the very last mite" (*Luke* xii. 58, 59). Now in this parable our adversary is whatever rises up to accuse us before the judgment-seat, whether it be our own conscience that urges it against us, or God almighty that reproaches us with it. The accused represents every guilty man, and the way to the judgment is our life here below. The judge is Jesus Christ; but what, then, is the prison? Is it heaven? No, assuredly, heaven is no prison. Is it hell? It can not be, for no one ever comes out of hell. The prison is purgatory, the place of purification, in which the soul is detained till the last stain of sin has been washed away, and its guilt expiated by punishment.

The existence of purgatory is especially borne witness to by the tradition and by practice of the Church. All the Fathers and Doctors, not only in more modern days, but in the most ancient Christian times, in the East as well as in the West, testify to the custom of praying for the dead. We can trace it right back to the apostles; and Tertul-

lian, writing in the second century, speaks of it as having come down to us from them. This is borne out by the fact that in the Mass those prayers which are of oldest date all contain petitions for the souls departed, and unless a place of expiation really exists these prayers are meaningless. The Church, moreover, solemnly promulgated this doctrine of purgatory at the Councils of Florence and Trent.

II

Now, as to what souls go to purgatory, the catechism tells us that it is for "those who die guilty of venial sins, or without having satisfied for the punishment due to their sins."

Purgatory exists only for spirits who, having been separated from their bodies by death, have not yet been reunited to them, for after the last day it will cease to be. It is peopled with the souls only of those who, by departing this life in a state of grace, have secured heaven, and who love God, and are loved also by Him. It is the place of expiation, the work of whose cleansing flames it is to atone for venial sin, and to complete the punishment still due to those sins the guilt of which had been forgiven in this life. The souls in purgatory are pure, but not wholly pure. They are penitential souls in a penitential state. How many of us will be found at the hour of death still in need of purification? Most probably far the greater number among us. If St. John, in speaking of the blessed in heaven, could say: "I saw a great multitude which no man could number of all nations and tribes and peoples and

tongues," so might any one to whom it was given to see purgatory equally exclaim: "I saw a great multitude whom no man could number of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues." The souls in purgatory, therefore, are penitential souls expiating and atoning for the sins of their life with a depth of sorrow earnest and heart-felt, a love of God ardent and pure, such as they never experienced while here in this world; enduring the punishments laid on them by God with a patience, a self-abnegation and a fortitude far surpassing anything attainable on earth. What are the punishments they have to endure? First and foremost, they are deprived of the vision of God, for whom they long with indescribable longing; then, further, they suffer those punishments which are generally associated in our minds as proper to purgatory—cleansing fires, kindled and kept alive by God, to purify the soul and render it fit to appear in His divine presence. These holy and penitential souls overflow in their feelings toward each other with that love and pity which they are so well deserving of.

Purgatory is a place of punishment and of suffering, but it is also the home of faith, hope, love, contrition, patience, sympathy, and consolation.

Finally, the souls in purgatory are related to us in this world and to the Church not materially, but with a spiritual relationship. Let us, each one of us, help to increase the rich stream of love and charity which is constantly flowing to them. No one is too old, no child is too young to contribute. May purgatory never deserve to be called the dwelling of forgotten and forsaken souls. By

the exercise of charity toward these our brethren, God's justice, which punishes the smallest transgression of His law, will be kept vividly before our minds, and we will be filled with a dread, not only of mortal, but of venial sin. Walking thus in the fear of God, and in the exercise of charity toward our neighbors, we may go forward ourselves to a merciful judgment. Amen.

## SERMON LVIII

### Hell

*"Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire"* (*Matt.* xxv. 41).

AFTER the particular judgment the soul either enters heaven, or it descends into hell, or else it goes to that place of purification called purgatory.

We have already seen what purgatory is, and what souls go there. We will now pass on to consider another place of punishment—hell. The thought of hell is a very wholesome one for us, exciting us to a horror of sin, to the fear of God's judgments, and impressing us with the importance of leading a Christian life.

With the help of the Holy Ghost let us try to realize to the full the awfulness of hell. It is

I. A great evil.
II. An eternal evil.
III. A certain evil.
IV. A just evil.

I

Hell is a great evil, both with regard to the good of which the damned are deprived, as well as the pains and sufferings they have to undergo.

Of what good does hell deprive them? Well, firstly, everything that adds pleasure to life here below and makes it agreeable, happy, comfortable, and desirable is denied them. It might be pos-

sible, perhaps, to learn to do without such things, but a far higher, greater good than all else is wanting to them. They are shut out forever from the vision of God, for which they were created and destined, and by which alone man's insatiable thirst for happiness can be satisfied—the vision of God which makes the joy of the saints and angels in heaven for all eternity and is the center of every hope and longing of the souls in purgatory. "Depart from Me, ye cursed!" What a torturing thought it must be to realize that we have irreparably lost the best and highest good, that we have failed to gain our highest end, and that it had been better for us never to have been born! How we shall be filled with envy at seeing others who were our companions in life, who were in the same position, and of the same age and faith as ourselves, perhaps even participators in our sins, take possession of the happiness which we must forego for all eternity!

But the sufferings of the damned are not entirely comprised in the loss of the highest good; they consist also in the pains and suffering they have to endure. For, what have their eyes to look upon? Darkness, eternal darkness. "Cast him out into the exterior darkness" (*Matt.* xxv. 30). What sounds do they hear? Curses, complaints, accusations, weeping, and gnashing of teeth. "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (*Matt.* xxii. 13). No kind or friendly word will ever fall on their ear, nothing but groans and shrieks to which they add their own lamentations and unavailing regrets. What is their food, what do they eat and drink? "The chalice of the wrath

of the Lord." How full of gall and bitterness must the draught from that chalice be! What feelings do they experience? They will feel the fire, which is the only one of the elements we hear of in hell. "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." The fire of hell, even though we can not say that it will be exactly the same as that with which we are familiar on earth, will be really fire. Electric light is real light, even though it is produced and maintained, lighted and extinguished differently from gas or oil lamps; and it gives, if anything, a brighter illumination. So the fire of hell, though produced and maintained in a way other than our fire here on earth, is nevertheless genuine fire. It is a fearful truth that men are now actually at this moment living in a fire kindled by the justice of God to punish them. One shudders and shrinks from pursuing this terrible thought. The ground they stand on is fire; the air they breathe is fire; fire burns their eyes, penetrates their lungs, flows in their veins, permeates their bones, burning into and searing their very brains.

Such are the tortures both of the senses and of the body to which the damned are subjected. But let us look deeper still, and see the poor soul itself overpowered with this terrible fire and suffering special tortures. The soul is a spirit, and it is the nature of spiritual beings to inquire into the causes and reasons of things, and even the souls in hell are no exception to this rule. Why am I here? Whose fault is it? Here we have the worm that never dies: "I might have been happy if I had liked, fool and wretch that I am. I had

power to avoid hell, but I have fallen into it, and I have done it myself. I believed in hell. I was well warned. A moment of repentance, a word of acknowledgment, a short time of penance would have won for me the vision of God. What madness, what incomprehensible madness! I might have been eternally happy, but instead of that I am in hell." O the gnawing pain of the worm that dieth not! We are justified in calling that a great evil which forces us to forego a good so desirable, to endure such sufferings, and to be tortured eternally by the worm of conscience.

II

Hell is an eternal evil; it will last forever. "Depart from me into everlasting fire." It is just this quality of being everlasting that constitutes the real evil of hell, for anything can be borne, or at least borne more easily if one can see the end of it. Prisoners count the years and the days to their release; a wounded man wants to know how soon his wounds will be healed; when we are sick we look forward to the time when we shall be able to leave our bed. But what have the damned to look forward to? Their punishment will never—never—have an end; God is eternal, their soul is eternal, the sentence was for all eternity: "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." O torture of tortures, abyss of despair! No change, no amelioration, no end—evil above all evils!

Now, I will not detain you by trying to describe the meaning of that word "eternally." No combination of numbers can be found great enough

to express the years of eternity, not even should its first figure be written on earth and its last reach up to the sun, or to the most distant star. Our minds are not so made that they are capable of forming an adequate idea of eternity; the very thought of it fills us with fear, and drives the damned to despair. They look for death, but they find it not. They curse God who sent them to such a place; they curse Christ who died for them in vain; the blood of Christ that flowed for them to no purpose; heaven which they have lost; the saints who possess the happiness that should have been theirs, too; the devil and hell from which there is no escape. And, finally, they curse and invoke maledictions on themselves whose fault it is that they have come to this place of torment.

III

Hell is a great and an eternal evil. But is it, then, so very certain that it really does exist? The faith of many Christians is weak and falls short when it comes to the doctrine of hell. They think it will not be so bad as all that; and that if even we human beings can not contemplate without horror the thought of an eternal hell and an eternal fire, surely God must be too good and merciful to torment His creatures in such a way. Hell, they say, should not be painted in such black colors, and it is far better not to speak or think too much about it. So far does this feeling go that one scarcely dares mention hell in the presence of educated people, but must allude to it merely by some periphrasis. This is the way, dearly beloved brethren, some Christians seek to

put the thought of hell out of their heads; they then cease to fear it, and do not try to avoid it. But its existence is a certainty nevertheless. Reason tells us so. Everything in creation has been ordered with regard to weight, measure, and number. The weightier and bulkier a body is the more heavily it falls to the ground. The lighter a body, on the other hand, the higher it rises. What weight is to material things, love is to spiritual beings. The deeper, the purer, the more heartfelt our love of God, the highest good, the higher the soul rises and the closer is its union with Him in heaven; the more the soul revels in the dross of earth and seeks earthly pleasures, the deeper it sinks into the abyss. It would be contrary to reason were it otherwise. God's revelation teaches that there is a hell. Does our Saviour not speak of a fire, an eternal unquenchable fire, of weeping and gnashing of teeth, of the worm that dieth not, of the outer darkness, and do not the apostles make use of the same expressions? Has the Church not always put forward as an article of faith that those who die in mortal sin are condemned to hell for all eternity? What, then, is the use of saying or thinking "things will not be so bad, and that it is a mistake to preach so often on hell and to think so much about it"? Suppose we do actually represent hell as worse than it really is, will that make it more terrible in fact? Not at all. Nor will its flames be mitigated should a preacher draw a picture of them milder and easier than the reality; neither will he be able to extinguish them by abstaining from mentioning them altogether. Were all preachers

and teachers to agree to keep silence on the subject of hell it would still continue to burn on. For as sure as there is a heaven to hope for, so surely is there a hell to fear. Our Saviour told us so, and it is as true as that He is the teacher of truth and the Son of God. He has not dressed up a bogey to frighten us. As surely as the Church is the pillar and the ground of truth, as certainly as there lives a just God, and that there is a difference between good and evil, so surely and certainly does hell exist. This being so it serves no purpose to be silent on the subject, to put it out of our thoughts or to speak of it with honeyed words and say, "It won't be so bad as all that." There burns its fire for all eternity; and therefore we ought to think of it and speak of it day and night, morning and evening; it would be cruel to keep back the knowledge of it and it is a real work of charity to paint it in its true colors and bring its terrors home to men, so that they may learn to know it, and fear it, and avoid it.

IV

Hell is an evil, a great evil, an eternal evil, a certain evil, but that is not all—it is a just evil.

It is just on the part of God almighty to inflict the punishment of hell-fire on the unrepentant sinner, after having poured mercy out on him in vain. For what has a sinner deserved for whom Christ died, for whom His blood has flowed, who could have received forgiveness of his sins in the sacrament of Penance, who was offered the body and blood of Christ as his food, for whom

heaven was waiting, and on whom all through his life patience and mercy have been expended? What, I ask, has he deserved? Hell. God is merciful, but God is also just. As our two hands are alike, so are God's mercy and justice also alike. His mercy in forgiving is as incomprehensible as is His justice in punishing.

Hell is just, with regard to the sinner who suffers the punishment. What has he deserved but hell who has offended such a master, abused such goodness, exhausted such patience? What does he deserve who, having died in sin, remains a sinner for all eternity?

Hell is a just evil and wholesome in its effects for all living Christians. The fear of it prevents many a sin, and converts many a sinner. Many serve God, and will save their souls, thanks to the fear of eternal punishment. Hell is an act of justice to the damned, but it is still more; it is a work of mercy to the living, compelling those who are unwilling to serve God out of love and gratitude to be faithful to Him out of fear of His punishments, and so save their souls for all eternity. Amen.

## SERMON LIX

### Hell

*"Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire"* (*Matt.* xxv. 41).

IMMEDIATELY after the particular judgment the soul goes either to heaven or to hell or to purgatory. We first considered purgatory—the fact of its existence and the souls that go there. Then we passed on to the contemplation of hell. We saw how great an evil it is, not only as regards the pain of loss which it inflicts, but also because of the pain of sense, the sufferings which the lost souls have to endure, namely: the torment of the flames, and the gnawing worm of an evil conscience. Hell, as well as being a great evil, is also an eternal evil, it will have no end; and it is an evil which certainly does exist and which we are told of by the lips of our Saviour Himself, by the apostles, and by the Church. It is, therefore, a great, an eternal, and a real evil. It may seem to us, and it is in fact often urged that there is no sort of proportion between the guilt of the sin and the punishment meted out to it in hell. Sin is so quickly committed and the punishment lasts forever. Sin is not entered into in malice, but the consequences it entails are so terrible. There is no comparison at all between them, and that there should be appears to us as the first condition of justice. And yet we are bound to look upon hell as fully deserved and the

just punishment of sin. This proposition rests on a three-fold foundation: the nature of the sin itself for which hell is the punishment; the nature of the damned who are undergoing the punishment; and the nature of God who imposes and enforces the punishment. We will consider these three points, briefly, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

I

The first reason for eternal punishment is found in the character of the sin which it exists to punish. We find no one in hell but sinners; and not only no one but sinners, but only those who have been guilty of mortal sin; and further than this only those who, having been guilty of mortal sin, die unrepentant, without contrition or penance. Consider well what mortal sin is. It is to violate the law of God with clear knowledge of what we are doing, with the full consent of our will in a matter of grave import. This implies, in other words, that a mere worm of the earth, a creature the work of God's hands, made out of nothing and of itself capable of nothing, rises up against the king of the universe, the creator and ruler of the world, the almighty God, in order to oppose His clearly expressed will. Mortal sin is paramount to saying by our actions, if not in words: I know what God's will is, but I want something different; and I will not do His will. I will follow my own way. It is saying, with the full consent of our will, to God almighty: "I refuse to serve Thee." What insolence, what arrogance, what temerity! Where can punishment be found severe

enough for such an outrage against the majesty of the all-holy and eternal God!

On a hot summer's evening, if we are annoyed by gnats, we have no compunction in destroying ten, twenty, or a hundred of these tiny atoms in one sweep, merely because they are a nuisance to us. And yet these little animals, were they able to understand and speak to us, might very well object and say: "I never intentionally and willingly did you any harm, and I am one of God's creatures as well as you." Yet we go on killing them all the same, because we consider the lives of these little gnats of less importance than our own comfort and well-being. And what are we in comparison with God almighty, and what can be adequate retribution for an outrage perpetrated knowingly and willingly by us who are the work of His hands in opposition to, and in contempt of, His holy will. Eternity is not long enough to punish one mortal sin as it deserves.

Mortal sin is something so grievous that it merits only eternal punishment. The greatness of an offense is in some measure gauged by the position and dignity of the person offended. Insults offered to kings and emperors pay the penalty of imprisonment, and what are all the kings and emperors of the world in comparison with the majesty of the eternal, omniscient, almighty God?

II

The second reason why hell must necessarily be eternal lies in the character of the damned themselves, who for all eternity remain hardened in sin.

It is of faith that every man, so long as he remains in this life, receives from God sufficient grace to be converted and to save his soul. It is also of faith that the means of salvation cease with death. If a man dies in friendship with God, he remains forever the friend and the child of God; he can never lose this grace. If he dies in mortal sin, the enemy of God, he must remain in mortal sin and be the enemy of God for all eternity. The time for conversion is at an end; for we must further believe that conversion without the help of God's grace is impossible.

It follows from all this that hell must of necessity be eternal. No sovereign would grant forgiveness to a condemned criminal who, great crimes having been proved against him, shows signs neither of repentance nor of a desire to reform. If any one in authority were to do such a thing it would be a very ill-judged, ill-advised proceeding. Is it likely, then, that God will ever put an end to hell? Never; the souls of the lost died in their sins, and did not become converted. They must remain, and persevere, and become hardened in sin, cursing the judge who condemned them, and blaspheming God who created hell; and though they must perforce endure their punishment it does not lead them to reform their hearts. One can even assert that they continue to sin, repeating it, aggravating it, sinking deeper and deeper into it, multiplying their sins. If, then, the sin continues for all eternity, why should the punishment also not last forever? If the souls in hell remain for all eternity sinners, why should the flames of punishment not eternally devour

them? O dreadful punishment, bringing with it no reform, no change, no conversion, no penance —only punishment, always punishment! Now, obviously, if the souls in hell can not receive grace, then they can never be rescued from their misery. But, you ask, why does God not give them such grace as will deliver them from this terrible condition? This question presents no difficulties at all. God does not give them this grace, because it is for Him to determine within what term and on what conditions a man shall have the opportunity of earning heaven or hell, and He has already given to the souls of the damned, probably a hundred times over, ample grace to be saved, and as long as life lasts He is ever ready to forgive the sinner and each individual sin. But the appointed term has now been reached and grace exists no more; there can be no conversion, no salvation out of hell. "Out of hell there is no salvation."

III

The third and final reason for the eternity of hell consists in the holiness and the justice of God.

The evidences of God's holiness and justice are in all respects as clear and convincing as those of His mercy, and He possesses these three characteristics in an equally high degree.

How has He in His goodness dealt with men, and in what way has He manifested His mercy to him? Out of pure goodness He created mankind, who is God's property, appointed to serve and honor Him. Apart from this man has no destiny.

But if he revolts against God and refuses Him the honor which is His due, then the Creator has the right to vindicate His own glory by punishing him. His infinite mercy to sinners was evinced by giving His only Son to redeem and save them by His blood, and what penalty could the divine justice devise that would be excessive for shedding in vain the blood of Jesus Christ? The infinite mercy of God led Him to forgive the sinner again and again—who can say how often?—no punishment can be too great for him who, in spite of this goodness, returns again to his sins. God's goodness in promising an eternity of happiness as a recompense of our short life here below is incomprehensible, and the fool who puts aside and refuses such happiness deserves extreme punishment. It is God's goodness that warns us against hell, making its existence known to us; telling us that it is eternal, and that all who die in mortal sin will fall into it; and does he who neglects such a warning, sinning and living in his sin, not merit to go there? God has manifested His mercy to man by creating him and redeeming him, by offering heaven to him and threatening him with hell. What more could He do to His vine? The sinner, having repulsed all these evidences of divine mercy, surely the time must come to make him feel the weight of the divine justice. The justice of God is on a level with His mercy. These two qualities in the divine nature are like the two hands of the one man, of the same size, shape, and build, of equal weight, strength, and power. The only difference is that the right is not the left, nor is the left the right. Therefore,

seeing that the proofs of God's mercy to us exceed all we could expect or imagine, are we not justified in asserting boldly that His justice will also far surpass all our conceptions of it? Hell is eternal.

We may, without hesitation, assert that hell is not only a just, but a most wholesome evil. It is just to the souls who are in it, wholesome for all others. This is the plain truth. There are many people who, falling into great temptation, are influenced neither by the thought of heaven nor of the goodness of God. But the remembrance of the flames of hell comes to their mind and turns them away from the commission of evil. There are souls, who, on their very deathbed, would refuse to be converted, were they not driven to it by the thought of hell. Many of those who are now saints in heaven would never have succeeded in reaching it, if the knowledge of hell had not caused them to walk in the fear of God. It is a fact that for many their hope of heaven, their love of God, their hatred of sin, would lose their force, if not backed up by horror of the flames of hell. For this reason the great Italian poet, Dante, tells us, that it was the highest wisdom and the truest love that founded hell.

"Justice, the founder of my fabric moved:
To rear me was the task of power divine,
Supremest wisdom and primeval love."

Nothing is so bad but that good can be drawn from it. Hell is a great evil, but we may derive from it the fear of God and strength to avoid sin and to attain life everlasting. Amen.

## SERMON LX

### Heaven

*"I believe in Life Everlasting. Amen"*

After the particular judgment the soul enters heaven, or it descends into hell, or it goes to be purified in purgatory. We have already made our meditations on purgatory and hell. The most consoling of all, that on heaven, now remains for us. Those souls which depart this life in a state of grace and free from the pains and penalties of sin, or who have expiated them afterward in purgatory, are then allowed to enter heaven to receive their reward.

In what does this reward consist? The catechism tells us, "(1) that the blessed in heaven see God face to face; (2) that they are made like to Him in glory and enjoy eternal happiness."

In order to realize the joys of heaven it would be necessary to call one of the saints down again on earth, and listen to his words: "Eye hath not seen," he would surely say, "nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them that love Him" (1 *Cor.* ii. 9).

In attempting to picture to ourselves in some measure the joys of heaven, we will make use of the figure of the Queen of Saba. She entered Jerusalem to see King Solomon "with a great train and riches and camels that carried spices, and an immense quantity of gold and precious

stones.'' Three points connected with her visit are specially worthy of notice.

I. What the queen heard.
II. What the queen saw.
III. What the queen said.

These three points taken out of the pages of the Bible history furnish us with a striking picture of what takes place when the soul appears for the first time in the presence of God our Father. Let us consider them devoutly, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

I

What did the Queen of Saba hear when she visited King Solomon? The Scriptures tell us: ''She spoke to him all that she had in her heart'' (3 *Kings* x. 2). She questioned the king and laid before him the many difficult, weighty, and complicated questions that troubled her. And Solomon, Holy Writ continues, ''informed her of all the things she proposed to him.'' He answered her questions, solved her difficulties, and enlightened all the dark places of her soul. The first-fruit of her visit, therefore, was an enormous increase of knowledge. The saints have the same experience when they first enter the house of their Father and gaze on His face, and the knowledge they acquire is vast and wonderful, indeed. Oh, when we are once admitted to the house of God and see His divine countenance, then we shall be free to speak out everything that is in our heart! He will answer us, or, better still, unasked, He will unravel and make clear to us every mystery.

Our souls are created for knowledge, and we

all ardently desire enlightenment far reaching and consoling to still this longing of the spirit. How little is it given to us to know here below! We have to be content with shreds and patches. But when we enter the house of God, then all the questionings of our heart will be fully answered, and our dearest aspirations satisfied. We shall learn the secrets of Nature, which she has hidden from us here in a manner so impenetrable that not all the sagacity and industry of the most learned minds, assisted by the most subtle instruments that human ingenuity could devise, have availed in unraveling them. They still remain shrouded in darkness and mystery, each answer giving rise to fresh questions. A single glance in the divine countenance will teach us more in one moment concerning heaven and earth, the elements, the sun, and the stars, than is known to all the naturalists combined. For God is not limited like Solomon who could "treat about trees from the cedar that is in Libanus, unto the hyssop that cometh out of the wall"; God almighty is the creator of nature, the king of the universe, who knows and understands from beginning to end, in their essence and substance, all His creatures. In the light of His countenance not only the secrets of nature, but those mysteries of religion about which the Fathers of the Church have thought and discoursed and written so much without ever fully appreciating them, and which we have accepted in faith and humility, will be unveiled. Then we shall get the answer to those great questions: "Why was I, poor creature, ever created? How have I, a miserable sinner,

been rescued from the abyss of sin? Wherefore was I beset with so many temptations and sorrows while on earth? How were my steps guided along the road, out of the vale of tears, to my heavenly fatherland?'' They will unlock for us the secrets of the divine goodness and mercy and make clear to us the workings of God's Providence and the enigma of predestination. So we shall question the divine Solomon, God; He will teach us not in words, but by the mere unveiling of His sacred countenance, all things, those of nature as well as those of faith; the secrets of the past and the future, of heaven and earth, of time and eternity, of things human and divine. All you who here below are by reason of a lack of intelligence, or memory, or education, or leisure, or opportunity counted amongst the ignorant, take comfort; a time will come when in an instant you will make up all the ground you have lost. Take comfort, all who here walk in the twilight of faith; a day will dawn when the darkness will be illuminated fully and radiantly by the light of the divine countenance.

II

We will go further, and ask what did the Queen of Saba see? ''And when the Queen of Saba saw all the wisdom of Solomon, and the house which he had built, and the meat of his table, and the apartments of his servants, and the order of his ministers, she had no longer any spirit in her'' (3 *Kings* x. 4, 5). Yet she was herself a queen, born and brought up in a palace, accustomed to royal splendor, and she brought with her princely

gifts and was accompanied by a numerous and costly retinue. But everything in the palace of Solomon was much more magnificent than in Saba. His servants were so numerous and of such high efficiency, their apartments were so well appointed, the food at the royal table so choice, the whole house so spacious and so bright with gold and ivory, the king himself was such a marvel of beauty and wisdom. As the queen gazed on all this splendor she became lost in wonderment, and fell into an ecstasy of delight, and as Holy Scripture expresses it, "she had no longer any breath in her."

With what feelings will our soul look upon the city and the house of God! We shall see the countless servants that wait on the King of heaven, the multitudes of angels, the nine choirs of the hosts of the Almighty. How great and well-ordered are their numbers! We think nothing of taking a considerable journey to be present at military maneuvers to watch the operations of the troops. There is very little more to be seen than a good deal of dust and gunpowder, a crowd of bright uniforms and faces; often it is only through fog and rain, and the smoke of the gunpowder, mingled with the dust of the road, that we get a glimpse of them at all, heated and tired and covered with sweat as they are But, in spite of these drawbacks we still consider it a very fine sight. But what will the vision of all the heavenly host be, arrayed in its choirs: "thousands of thousands ministered to Him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before Him"? (*Dan.* vii. 10.) Then there will be the

heavenly palace itself! When we look round this world in which we live we see how beautiful it is, with its contrast of mountain and valley, wood, meadow, and field, water and land, light and shade; what richness of color, what shades of light in the flowers under our feet; and over our heads the beautiful star-decked sky! Now, if this abode of sinners, where evil has such sway, is so great and beautiful, I ask you what must be the beauty of that home prepared by God for His chosen friends, where He has erected His throne, and where He manifests His glory, and unveils His countenance? How glorious must be that first vision of God! Oh, when we see face to face God our Father who made us; Jesus Christ, His Son, who redeemed us; the Holy Spirit, who sanctified us, what feelings shall we experience! Tobias, meeting his old blind father again after a long separation, fell into his arms and wept for joy. And yet it was only the aged, blind, faded, wrinkled face of an old man that Tobias looked upon—but it was that of his father. The poor blind father on his part saw nothing at all. When the Queen of Saba saw the palace, and the servants of the king, and finally the king himself, she was beside herself with rapture—"the spirit went out of her." And what will happen when we first are allowed to gaze upon the face of God? Wonder, delight, rapture, will overflow our souls, we will be so transfixed at the sight of God that we will nevermore be able to detach our eyes from His divine countenance, and centuries will seem to us like fleeting moments: "Oh, Israel, how great is the house of God, and how vast is

the place of His possession'' (*Bar.* iii. 24). Let us wait, and persevere—heaven is worth sorrow and suffering and hard work.

III

What did the Queen of Saba say: ''The report is true which I heard in my own country concerning thy words and concerning thy wisdom. And I did not believe them that told me till I came myself and saw with my own eyes and have found that the half hath not been told me; thy wisdom and thy works exceed the fame which I heard''? (3 *Kings* x. 6, 7.) This is exactly the language we will hold when we come before the heavenly king: O how true is all that was spoken on earth. There I was told ''eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them that love Him'' (1 *Cor.* ii. 9). Now I see that not half, not the hundredth part, had been described to me. Oh, God, Thy beauty and Thy works far exceed all that has been said of them; so wonderful are they that human language and human thoughts are not adequate to give expression to them.

The prophet Ezechiel drew on a tile a picture of Jerusalem, and whoever looked at that tile saw only a small and very imperfect representation of the beautiful city. But those who were familiar with the real Jerusalem, with its beautiful gates, high towers, strong walls, and magnificent temple must have said: ''That picture on the little tile was in a sense like the original; it was correct, but of course it was impossible by a few

miserable strokes and lines scratched on a tile to give an impression of the beauty and splendors of such a city." In the same way all that we hear and read on earth, this vale of tears, of the heavenly Jerusalem, is but a weak and feeble picture of the glories of heaven.

The Queen of Saba further said: "Blessed are thy men, and blessed are thy servants, who stand before thee always and hear thy wisdom" (3 *Kings* x. 8). She justly considered these men happy to be from day to day before the most wise king, seeing and hearing him, living in intercourse with him, and dwelling constantly in his house. But happier above all comparison are those who stand for all eternity before the throne of God, gazing on His divine countenance.

In considering the joy and happiness of the blessed in heaven we must not forget that we are called to share it, that heaven is our true home, where we are to abide for all eternity, and where so many of our loved ones have gone before us. This earth is a place of transition and we have here no abiding city. To earn by work and suffering, by battling with temptation and by practising detachment, the eternal life which awaits us is the object of this life here below. So let us begin without delay to devote all our powers to deserving our heavenly home; refusing no work, however hard, that is to merit eternal rest; accepting every sorrow that is leading us to unspeakable happiness—traveling through this world as pilgrims, indeed, but with the hope and the belief that we shall one day arrive in the land of eternal life. Amen.

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